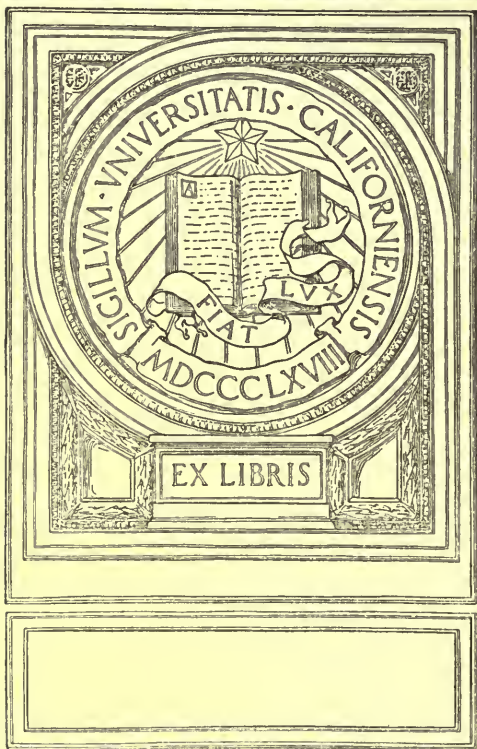




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# DEADLOCK

NOVELS BY  
DOROTHY M. RICHARDSON

*"To me, these novels show an art and method  
and form carried to punctilious perfection."*

—May Sinclair.

DEADLOCK  
INTERIM  
THE TUNNEL  
HONEYCOMB  
BACKWATER  
POINTED ROOFS

NEW YORK, ALFRED A. KNOPF

# DEADLOCK

By DOROTHY M. RICHARDSON  
WITH A FOREWORD BY WILSON FOLLETT



NEW YORK  
ALFRED A. KNOPF  
1921

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FOREWORD BY WILSON FOLLETT

The publication of "Deadlock" brings the career of a most arresting and significant novelist to the point at which it becomes possible, if not imperative, to add something to what Mr. J. D. Beresford wrote, some six years ago, in his wholly admirable Foreword to "Pointed Roofs." That career, here defined by another milestone, has proceeded thus far, through considerable stages of growth, to be sure, but without essential change of direction. It has also become—what, for all I know, Miss Richardson herself might humorously deprecate the notion of its being—a substantial Force.

Somehow, I cannot imagine this writer as attaching much importance to the concept of herself as a contemporary and future influence. She is all for thinking with one's nerves; for seizing, with sensitive delicacy of intuition, the immediate quintessence of things as they are in themselves—not the ultimate effect of things as they are in their implications. She once made her recurring character, Miriam Henderson—a being whom I choose, without argument, to identify with certain past phases of the novelist's own consciousness—deliver several pages of really fruitful speculation on the ultimate function of the novel. The upshot of all that speculation was just this: that a novel exists to give you, its reader, not puppets, not places, not situations, not dramatic *contretemps*, not atmosphere, and most assuredly not ideas or argu-

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ments, but, simply and solely, *the novelist*. If you as a reader penetrate through the show to the showman; if, feeling your way inerrantly among the machinery and the details of his spectacle, you arrive at a thrilling and life-giving apprehension of the author's personality as it is, in its nuances, as it is in its inalienable differences, as it is in itself—then you are a real reader, you know what fiction is for, you have got out of it the utmost that it has to give.

It is, I suppose, incontestable that Miss Richardson's own six volumes are so written as to facilitate precisely that sort of apprehension by her readers. The leverage which she wishes to exert upon them is that of the unique personality intimately grasped, without reference to such irrelevant affairs as literary forms or formulæ, tendencies, philosophies, schools, æsthetic canons and traditions. In short, what she is trying to communicate is the most desperately generous of all gifts—the gift of herself. That is why, I suspect, she would be indifferent to any attempt to estimate her bearings on the contemporary fictional scene as a whole. The effort to "place" her, she would almost necessarily construe as an effort to dispose of her altogether, and on the cheapest terms—to reject her on the one ground on which she offers herself, while accepting her on grounds wholly foreign to her mind and purpose. The logical outcome of any such process she would doubtless see as an identification of her destiny with that of the forlorn classics by which we are all influenced, whether we have read them or not. She might even add that to be imitated is the last unbearable evidence of failure, since the sole accomplishment to which she has ever aspired is one which must remain inimitable.

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Nevertheless, it is precisely of Miss Richardson as a Force, as a cognizable influence which begins to have its day and its way, that one must speak if one is to add anything to Mr. Beresford's earlier Foreword. That declaration—a realist's appraisal, on realistic grounds, of another realist—still holds good for what it purports to be. But meanwhile the author of "Pointed Roofs" has got herself into the clutches of history—an achievement entailing rewards and, if you insist, penalties. And this is a fact which can be reported without convicting the reporter of stupidity as to the inwardness of the author's intention. It is merely an additional and supplementary fact, which, to be sure, must not be offered in lieu of appreciation, but which may nevertheless, from its own angle and on its own premises, have a capital value.

What, now—to proceed on this basis—have been the measurable effects of the five volumes from "Pointed Roofs" to "The Tunnel"? No fictional performance of our time has been anything like so queerly esoteric, judged by the prevailing standards—that is to say, habits—of writers and readers. Yet no recent accomplishment in the novel has left its impress more deeply and indelibly along the trail of fiction in this decade. The sequence begun with "Pointed Roofs" is every bit as bizarre, superficially considered, as "Tristram Shandy"; it has made less clatter in the world than some moron's latest volume of gibberish in aborted prose masquerading as *vers libre*; and yet its place in the evolution of the novel is already so inexpugnable that a clever historian could infer its existence without ever having heard of it, as astronomers calculate the mass of an invisible star to explain the behaviour of visible bodies. Explain, if

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you can, without Miss Richardson and her narrative method, the symptoms that began to dominate Miss May Sinclair in "Mary Oliver." A like process of gravitation has been at work on the remarkably virile talent of Mrs. C. A. Dawson-Scott, and on the as remarkably feminine one of Clemence Dane. It is doubtful if Mr. Beresford himself has remained quite unaffected. And the very startling recent aberration of Miss Mary Johnston from her orbit is difficult to understand except as the resultant of a cross-pull between inherent neurotic religiosity and the direct or indirect influence of the author of "Pilgrimage." One finds Miss Richardson everywhere nowadays. Her very gesture shows in pages written by imitators of imitations of her imitators. Dorothy Richardson is as authentic an expression of something that, historically speaking, *had to be* as Samuel Richardson was; and Miriam's literary progeny are like to become as numerous as Pamela's.

This something which had to be expressed, and of which her work was the first definitive expression in the English novel, was no less a portent than the whole self-tortured modern consciousness, together with the precise idiom in which it does its thinking. Miss Richardson partly invented, and partly adapted from the Imagist poets—who, in turn, stem from post-impressionism in the plastic arts—the language in which it should be expressed. She was the first to begin a step beyond the project—carried by Henry James to the ultimate attainable proficiency—of making words define facts *about* consciousness. Her task is to make words embody consciousness itself—the living stream of perceptions, intuitions, images, taken moment by

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moment as it flows, for whatever it may be worth. The elder fashion, the Henry James method, was to follow the stream of an individual consciousness as it slipped under the bridge whereon one had more or less advantageously perched oneself. Miss Richardson's method is to *be* the slipping stream. She masters her subject, not by analyzing it from a strategic angle, but by achieving complete identity with it throughout. This I conceive to be what Mr. Beresford means when he says that Miss Richardson "has taken the final plunge," that her "Miriam is, indeed, one with life."

So much for the contemporary development—a development so completely crystallized in the work of Miss Richardson, its pioneer, that it would stand hereafter as a *fait accompli* by virtue of her work alone. Now, what is this development of the present going to signify to the future? I cling determinedly to the hope that it will constitute nothing less than the inauguration of that super-realism which is, perhaps, the True Romance of tomorrow. Realism according to Zola, according to Howells, according to Arnold Bennett, has admirably discharged its function—briefly, to be a corrective of the elder sentimentalism—and might as well now discharge itself. It is ripe for dissolution; the record of its passing, even while we wait, is as legible to all but the slow-witted as anything in history. The question is, What next? One possible answer is represented by the evolution of a more beautiful symbolism for whatever we can grasp as truth—and very beautiful such a symbolism can be in the hands, let us say, of Mr. James Branch Cabell. The other possible answer—Miss Richardson's—is the frank exploration, by art as by science, of a new province, that of the Self.

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By the queerest conceivable inversion of all ordinary likelihood, our human knowledge began at the remotest outpost of the stellar universe and worked slowly homeward to ourselves. We knew nothing about this earth until we had more or less unriddled the skies, nothing about matter until we had found our way about the earth, nothing about organic life until we had determined some basic facts about matter, nothing about man's body until we had framed the concept of all organic life as somehow one, nothing about man's mind until we had read it as a function of his body. Each of these major advances in knowledge began by producing upheaval, despair, and ended by producing liberation, romance, art. The conquest that remains to us is that of consciousness itself—of that awareness of being which contains and overlaps every specific action of the mind. From everything that is known, the mind of the race comes home at the last to *that which knows*. This coming home, is it not the last and most stupendous romance of the ages? It is not to be accomplished, perhaps, save at the cost of universal momentary disaster, despair, morbidity, self-torture—the growing-pains of the race—but it is inevitable for all that. And once we have learned to face without horror the reality of ourselves, we can find our ways about the penetralia of our own being as comfortably as the early mariners found theirs about a terrestrial globe but recently emerged from nightmare.

Now, it is the singular project of art in our generation to brave the risks and penalties of this adventure hand in hand with science. Always before, art has taken its inception from accepted truth, assimilated knowledge; its adventure has had to be more of form than of substance. But now it is adventurous in



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essence, adventurous through and through. All honest post-impressionism both deals in a new substance and creates, for the new substance, a new form. Art instead of waiting for the new introspection to be brought past its stage of excited, rasped self-consciousness to a point of serene and leisurely approaches, surrenders itself to the excitation, makes the rasped self-consciousness of the age its principal material.

Perhaps you hold that to do this is a wrong, because a premature, tactic for the artist; that there is no true art which is not based on serenity. Well, I am not choosing this occasion for either denial or affirmation. It is enough to point out, that Miss Richardson's work is the first and incomparably the most audacious transference to English fiction of a venture in which every one of us, moderns has a stake, simply because it involves the mind and nervous tissue of the species. Can we pluck the fine fruits of complete self-awareness, or does the attempt mean universal dementia? That is the problem which touches all who are of our epoch. The more premature Miss Richardson's experiment strikes you as being, the more audacious you will find it. Also—if there be any soundness in my notion of the outcome—to insist that it is premature is only another way of saying that it is prophetic.

What remains to be said is that "Deadlock," even more than its predecessors, concentrates and harmonizes its author's two great gifts of a brilliant subtlety and a nervous vitality. All tendencies and philosophies aside, this is by a good deal the best thing she has done. She has been growing, all the while that she has refused to change except in the direction of herself. The great thing in Miss Richardson is her sense

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of the actual clutch of life, upon all the faculties of one who truly lives, as her Miriam Henderson lives in these pages. This sense has never, I think, been so sharp, so momentous, or so rewarding as here in "Deadlock."

WILSON FOLLETT.



DEADLOCK



## CHAPTER I

MIRIAM ran upstairs narrowly ahead of her thoughts. In the small enclosure of her room they surged about her, gathering power from the familiar objects silently waiting to share her astounded contemplation of the fresh material. She swept joyfully about the room, ducking and doubling to avoid arrest until she should have discovered some engrossing occupation. But in the instant's pause at each eagerly opened drawer and cupboard, her mind threw up images. It was useless. There was no escape up here. Pelted from within and without, she paused in laughter with clasped restraining hands . . . the rest of the evening must be spent with people. . . the nearest; the Baileys; she would go down into the dining-room and be charming with the Baileys until to-morrow's busy thoughtless hours were in sight. Half-way downstairs she remembered that the forms waiting below, for so long unnoticed and unpondered, might be surprised, perhaps affronted, by her sudden interested reappearance. She rushed on. She could break through that barrier. Mrs. Bailey's quiet withholding dignity would end in delight over a shared gay acknowledgment that her house was looking up.

She opened the dining-room door, facing in advance the family gathered at needlework under the gaslight, an island group in the waste of dreary in-

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creasing shabbiness . . . she would ask some question, apologizing for disturbing them. The room seemed empty; the gas was turned dismally low. Only one light was on, the once new, drearily hopeful incandescent burner. Its broken mantle shed a ghastly bluish-white glare over the dead fern in the centre of the table and left the further parts of the room in obscurity. But there was some one there; a man, sitting perched on the sofa-head, and beyond him someone sitting on the sofa. She came forward into silence. They made no movement; boarders, people she did not know, stupefied by their endurance of the dreariness of the room. She crossed to the fireside and stood looking at the clock-face. The clock was not going. "Are you wanting the real Greenwich, Miss Henderson?" She turned, ashamed of her mean revival of interest in a world from which she had turned away, to observe the woman who had found possible a friendly relationship with Mr. Gunner. "Oh yes I *do*," she answered hurriedly, carefully avoiding the meeting of eyes that would call forth his numb clucking laughter. But she was looking into the eyes of Mrs. Bailey. . . . Sitting tucked neatly into the sofa corner, with clasped hands, her shabbiness veiled by the dim light, she appeared to be smiling a far-away welcome from a face that shone rounded and rosy in the gloom. She was neither vexed nor pleased. She was far away, and Mr. Gunner went on conducting the interview. He was speaking again, with his watch in his hand. He, having evidently become a sort of intimate of the Baileys, was of course despising her for her aloofness during the bad period. She paid no heed to his words, remaining engrossed in Mrs. Bailey's curious still man-

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ner, her strange unwonted air of having no part in what was going on.

She sought about for some question to justify her presence and perhaps break the spell, and recovered a memory of the kind of enquiry used by boarders to sustain their times of association with Mrs. Bailey. In reply to her announcement that she had come down to ask the best way of getting to Covent Garden early in the morning Mrs. Bailey sat forward as if for conversation. The spell was partly broken, but Miriam hardly recognized the smooth dreamy voice in which Mrs. Bailey echoed the question, and moved about the room enlarging on her imaginary enterprise, struggling against the humiliation of being aware of Mr. Gunner's watchfulness, trying to recover the mood in which she had come down and to drive the message of its gaiety through Mrs. Bailey's detachment. She found herself at the end of her tirade, standing once more facing the group on the sofa; startled by their united appearance of kindly, smiling, patient, almost patronizing tolerance. Lurking behind it was some kind of amusement. She had been an awkward fool, rushing in, seeing nothing. They had been discussing business together, the eternal difficulties of the house. Mr. Gunner was behind it all now, intimate and helpful and she had come selfishly in, interrupting. Mrs. Bailey had the right to display indifference to her assumption that anything she chose to present should receive her undivided attention; and she had not displayed indifference. If Mr. Gunner had not been there she would have been her old self. There they sat, together, frustrating her. Angered by the pressure of her desire for reinstatement she crashed against their

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quietly smiling resistance. "Have I been interrupting you?"

"No, young lady; certainly not," said Mrs. Bailey in her usual manner, brushing at her skirt.

"I believe I have," smiled Miriam obstinately.

Mr. Gunner smiled serenely back at her. There was something extraordinary in such a smile coming from him. His stupid raillery was there, but behind it was a modest confidence.

"No," he said gently. "I was only trying to demonstrate to Mrs. Bailey the bi-nomial theorem."

They did not want her to go away. The room was freely hers. She moved away from them, wandering about in it. It was full, just beyond the veil of its hushed desolation, of bright light; thronging with scenes ranged in her memory. All the people in them were away somewhere living their lives; they had come out of lives into the strange, lifeless, suspended atmosphere of the house. She had felt that they were nothing but a part of its suspension, that behind their extraordinary secretive talkative openness there was nothing, no personal interest or wonder, no personality, only frozen wary secretiveness. And they had *lives* and had gone back into them or forward to them. Perhaps Mrs. Bailey and Mr. Gunner had always realized this . . . always seen them as people with other lives, not ghosts, frozen before they came, or unfortunates coming inevitably to this house rather than to any other, to pass on, frozen for life, by their very passage through its atmosphere. . . . There had been the Canadians and the foreigners, unconscious of the atmosphere; free and active in it. Perhaps because they really went to Covent Garden and Petticoat Lane

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and Saint Paul's. . . . There's not many stays 'ere long; them as stays, stays always. A man writing; pleased with making a single phrase stand for a description of a third-rate boarding-house, not seeing that it turned him into a third-rate boarding-house. . . . Stays always; *always*. But that meant *boarders*; perhaps only those boarders who did nothing at all but live in the house, waiting for their food; "human odds and ends" . . . literary talk, the need for phrases.

These afterthoughts always came, answering the man's phrase; but they had not prevented his description from coming up always now together with any thoughts about the house. There was a truth in it, but not anything of the whole truth. It was like a photograph . . . it made you *see* the slatternly servant and the house and the dreadful looking people going in and out. Clever phrases that make you see things by a deliberate arrangement, leave an impression that is false to life. But men do see life in this way, disposing of things and rushing on with their talk; they think like that, all their thoughts false to life; everything neatly described in single phrases that are not true. Starting with a false statement they go on piling up their books. That man never saw how extraordinary it was that there should be *anybody*, waiting for *anything*. But why did their clever phrases keep on coming up in one's mind?

Smitten suddenly when she stood still to face her question, by a sense of the silence of the room, she recognized that they were not waiting at all for her to make a party there. They wanted to go on with their talk. They had not merely been sitting there in coun-



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cil at the heart of the gloom because the arrival of new boarders was beginning to lift it. They had sat like that many times before. They were grouped together between her and her old standing in the house, and not only they, but life, going, at this moment, on and on. They did not know, life did not know, what she was going to prove. They did not know why she had come down. She could not go back again without driving home her proof. It was here the remainder of the evening must be passed, standing on guard before its earlier part, strung by it to an animation that would satisfy Mrs. Bailey and restore to herself the place she had held in the house at the time when her life there had not been a shapeless going on and on. The shapelessness had gone on too long. Mrs. Bailey had been aware of it, even in her estrangement. But she could be made to feel that she had been mistaken. Looked back upon now, the interval showed bright with things that would appear to Mrs. Bailey as right and wonderful life; they were wonderful now, linked up with the wonder of this evening, and could be discussed with her, now that it was again miraculously certain they were not all there was.

But Mr. Gunner was still there, perched stolidly in the way. In the old days antagonism and some hidden fear there was in his dislike of her, would have served to drive him away. But now he was immovable; and felt, or for some reason thought he felt, no antagonism. Perhaps he and Mrs. Bailey had discussed her together. In this intolerable thought she moved towards the sofa with the desperate intention of sitting intimately down at Mrs. Bailey's side and beginning somehow, no matter how, to talk in a way

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that must in the end send him away. "There's a new comet," she said violently. They looked up simultaneously into her face, each of their faces wearing a kind, veiled, unanimous patience. Mrs. Bailey held her smile and seemed about to speak; but she sat back resuming her dreamy composure as Mr. Gunner taking out his notebook cheerfully said:

"If you'll give me his name and address we'll take the earliest opportunity of paying a call."

Mrs. Bailey was pleading for indulgence of her failure to cover and distribute this jest in her usual way. But she was ready now for a seated confabulation. But he would stay, permitted by her, immovable, slashing across their talk with his unfailing snigger, unreproved.

"All sorts of people are staying up to see it; I suppose 'one ought,'" Miriam said cheerfully. She could go upstairs and think about the comet. She went away, smiling back her response to Mrs. Bailey's awakening smile.

Her starlit window suggested the many watchers. Perhaps he would be watching? But if he had seen no papers on the way from Russia he might not have heard of it. It would be something to mention tomorrow. But then one would have to confess that one had not watched. She opened her window and looked out. It was a warm night; but perhaps this was not the right part of the sky. The sky looked intelligent. She sat in front of the window. Very soon now it would not be too early to light the gas and go to bed.

No one had ever seen a comet rushing through space. There was nothing to look for. Only people who knew the whole map of the sky would recognize

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the presence of the comet. . . . But there was a sort of calming joy in watching even a small piece of a sky that others were watching too; it was one's own sky because one was a human being. Knowing of the sky and even very ignorantly a little of the things that made its effects, gave the most quiet sense of being human; and a sense of other human beings, not as separate disturbing personalities, but as sky-watchers. . . . "Looking at the stars one feels the infinite pettiness of mundane affairs. I am perpetually astonished by the misapplication of the term *infinite*. How, for instance, can one thing be said to be infinitely smaller than another?" He had always objected only to the inaccuracy, not to the dreary-weary sentiment. Sic transit. Almost every one, even people who liked looking at the night-sky seemed to feel that, in the end. How do they get this kind of impression? If the stars are sublime, why should the earth be therefore petty? It is part of a sublime system. If the earth is to be called petty, then the stars must be called petty too. They may not even be inhabited. Perhaps they mean the movement of the vast system going on for ever, while men die. The indestructibility of matter. But if matter is indestructible, it is not what the people who used the phrase mean by *matter*. If matter is not conscious, man is more than matter. If a small, no matter how small, conscious thing is called petty in comparison with big, no matter how big unconscious things, everything is made a question of size, which is absurd. But all these people think that consciousness dies. . . .

The quiet forgotten sky was there again; intelligent, blotting out unanswered questions, silently reaching

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down into the life that rose faintly in her to meet it, the strange mysterious life, far away below all interference, and always the same.

Teaching, being known as a teacher, had brought about Mrs. Bailey's confident promise to the Russian student. There was no help for that. If he were cheated, it was part of the general confusion of the outside life. He also was subject to that. It would be a moment in his well-furnished life, caught up whenever his memory touched it, into the strand of contemptible things. He would see her drifting almost submerged in the flood of débris that made up the boarding-house life, its influence not recognized in the first moments because she stood out from it, still bearing, externally, the manner of another kind of life. The other kind of life was there, but able to realize itself only when she was alone. It had been all round her, a repelling memory. just now in the dining-room . . . blinding her . . . making her utterly stupid . . . and there they were, in another world, living their lives; their smiling patience taking its time, amused that she did not see. Of *course* that was what he had meant. There was no other possible meaning . . . behind barred gates, closed against her, they had sat, patiently impatient with her absurdity . . . Mrs. Bailey and Mr. Gunner. . .

*He* had had the clearness of vision to discover what she was . . . behind her half-dyed grey hair and terrible ill-fitting teeth. Glorious. Into the midst of her failing experiment, at the very moment when the shadow of on-coming age was making it visibly tragic, had come this man in his youth, clear-sighted and determined, seeing her as his happiness, his girl.

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She was a girl, modest and good. . . . Circumstances could do nothing. There as she stood at bay in the midst of them, the thing she believed in, her one test of everything in life, always sure of her defence and the shelter of her curious little iron strength, had come again to her herself, all her own . . . it was the unasked reward of her unswerving faith. She stood decorated by a miracle.

Mrs. Bailey had triumphed; justified her everlasting confident smile.

She was enviable; her qualities blazoned by success in a competition whose judges, being blind, never failed in discovery. . . .

But the miracle gleams only for a moment, and the personal life, no longer threading its way in a wonderful shining mysteriously continuous and decisive pattern freely in and out of the world-wide everything, is henceforth labelled and exposed, repeating until the eye wearies of its fixity, one little lustreless shape; and the outside world is left untouched and unchanged. Is it worth while? A blind end, in which death swiftly increases. . . . But without it, in the end, there is no shape at all?

The hour had been such a surprising success because of a smattering of *knowledge*: until the moment when he had said I have always from the first been interested in philosophy. Then knowing that the fascinating thing was philosophy and being ignorant of philosophy, brought the certainty of being unable to keep pace. . . . Philosophy had come, the strange nameless thread in the books that were not novels, with its terrible known name at last and disappeared in the same moment for ever away into the lives of people who



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were free to study. . . . But if, without knowing it, one had been for so long interested in a subject, surely it gave a sort of right? Perhaps he would go on talking about philosophy without asking questions. No matter what failure lay ahead, it might be possible, even if the lessons lasted only a little while, to find out all he knew about philosophy. It was a privilege, another of those extraordinary privileges coming suddenly and unexpectedly in strange places, books or people knowing all about things one had already become involved in without knowing when or why, people interested and attracted by a response that at first revealed no differences, so that they all in turn took one to be like themselves, and looking at life in their way. It made a relationship that was as false as it was true. What they were, they were permanently; always true to the same things. Why being so different, was one privileged to meet them? There must be some explanation. There was something that for awhile attracted all kinds of utterly different people, men and women—and then something that repelled them, some sudden revelation of opposition, or absolute difference, making one appear to have been playing a part. Insincere and fickle.

What is fickleness? He is fickle, people say, with a wise smile. But one always knows quite well why people go away, and why one goes oneself. Not having the sense of fickleness probably means that one is fickle. There is something behind the accusation and the maddening smile with which it is always made, that makes you say thank heaven. People who are not what they call fickle, but always the same, are always, in the midst of their bland security, depressed

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about life in general, and have "a poor opinion of humanity." "Humanity does not change," they say. It is the same as it was in the beginning is now and ever will be. . . . And now to Godthefather . . . and they find even their steadfast relationships *dull*. They are the people who talk about "ordinary everyday life" and approve of "far horizons" and desert islands and the other side of the moon, as if they were real and wonderful and life was not. If they went there it would be the same to them; they would be just the same there; but something in the way their lives are arranged prevents them from ever suddenly meeting Mr. Shatov. They meet only each other. The men make sly horrible jokes together . . . the Greeks had only one wife; they called it monotony.

. . . But I find my daily round at Wimpole Street dull. No, not dull; wrong in some way. I did not choose it; I was forced into it. I chose it; there was something there; but it has gone. If it had not gone I should never have found other things. "But you would have found something else, my child." No I am glad it has gone. I see now what I have escaped. "But you would have developed differently and not got out of touch. People don't if they are always together." But that is just the dreadful thing. . . . Cléo de Mérode going back sometimes, with just one woman friend, to the little cabarets. . . . Intense sympathy with that means that one is a sort of adventuress . . . the Queen can never ride on an omnibus.

Why does being free give a feeling of meanness? Being able to begin all over again, always unknown, at any moment; feeling a sort of pity and contempt



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for the people who can't; and then being happy and forgetting them. But there is pain all round it that they never know. It is only by the pain of remaining free that one can have the whole world round one all the time. . . . But it disappears. . . .

No, just at the moment you are most sure that everything is over for ever, it comes again, and you cannot believe it ever disappeared. But with the little feeling of meanness; towards the people you have left and towards the new people. If you have ever failed anybody, you have no right to speak to anyone else. All these years I ought never to have spoken to anybody. "If I have shrunk unequal from one contest the joy I find in all the rest becomes mean and cowardly. I should hate myself if I then made my other friends my asylum." Emerson would have hated me. But he thinks evil people are necessary. How is one to know whether one is really evil? Suppose one is. The Catholics believe that even the people in hell have a little relaxation now and again. Lewes said it is the relief from pain that gives you the illusion of bliss. It was cruel when she was dying; but if it is true where is the difference? Perhaps in being mean enough to take relief you don't deserve. Can any one be thoroughly happy and thoroughly evil?

Botheration. Some clue had been missed. There was something incomplete in the thought that had come just now and seemed so convincing. She turned back and faced the self that had said one ought to meet everything in life with one's eyes on the sky. It had flashed in and out, between her thoughts. Now it seemed alien. Other thoughts were coming up, the thoughts and calculations she had not meant to make,

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but they rushed forward, and there was something extraordinary behind them, something that was part of the sky, of her own particular sky as she knew it. She had the right to make them, having been driven away from turning them into social charm for the dining-room. Once more she turned busily to the sky, thrusting back her thoughts; but it was just the flat sky of everyday, part of London; with nothing particular to say.

Thinking it over up here, alone in the universe, could not hurt the facts. Tomorrow there would be more facts. That could not be helped, unless one died in the night or the house were burned down. Facing the empty sky, sitting between it and the empty stillness of the house she felt she was beaten; too tired now to struggle against the tide of reflections she had fled downstairs to avoid. . . .

Only this morning, it seemed days ago, coming into the hall at Wimpole Street, the holidays still about her, little changes in the house, the greetings, the busy bustling cheerfulness, the sense of fresh beginnings, all ending in that dreadful moment of realization; being back in the smell of iodoform for another year; knowing that the holidays had changed nothing; that there was nothing in this life that could fulfil their promises; nothing but the circling pressing details, invisible in the distance, now all there, at a glance, horribly promising to fill her days and leave her for her share only tired evenings. Unpacking, the spell of sunburnt summer-scented, country-smelling clothes, the fresh beginning in her room, one visit to an A.B.C. and the British Museum and everything would be dead again. No

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change at Tansley Street; through the crack in the dining-room door Mr. Rodkin and his newspapers, Mr. Gunner sitting over the empty grate waiting for nothing; Mrs. Mann standing on the hearthrug, waiting to explain away something, watching Sissie and Mrs. Bailey clear the table, with a smile fixed on her large well-made child's face, Mr. Keppel coming out of the room with his graceful halting lounge and going on, unseeing, upstairs, upright in his shabby dreamy grey clothes as if he were walking on level ground. Lingered a moment too long, Mrs. Bailey in the hall, her excited conspirator's smiles as she communicated the news of Mr. Rodkin's friend and the lessons, as if nothing were changed and one were still always available for association with the house; her smiling calculating dismay at the refusal, her appeal to Mr. Rodkin, his abstracted stiff-jointed emergence into the hall with his newspaper, his brilliant-eyed, dried-up laugh, his chuckling assertion, like a lawyer, that he had promised the lessons and Shatov must not be disappointed; the suspicion that Mrs. Bailey was passing the moments in fear of losing a well-to-do newcomer, an important person brought in by her only good boarder; the wretched sense of being caught and linked up again in the shifts and deceptions of the bankrupt house; the uselessness; the certainty that the new man, as described, would be retained only by his temporary ignorance and helplessness, the vexatious thought of him, waiting upstairs in the drawing-room in a state of groundlessly aroused interest and anticipation, Mr. Rodkin's irresponsible admiring spectator's confidence as he made the introductions

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and vanished whilst the little dark frock-coated figure standing alone in the cold gaslight of the fireless room was still in the attitude of courteous obeisance; the happy ease of explaining to the controlledly waiting figure the impossibility of giving lessons on one's own language without the qualification of study; his lifted head, the extraordinary gentleness of the white, tremulous, determined features, the child-like openness of the broad forehead, the brilliant gentle deprecating eyes, familiar handsome unknown kindness gleaming out between the high arch of rich black hair and the small sharply-pointed French beard; the change in the light of the cold room with the sound of the warm deep voice; the few well-chosen struggling words; scholarship; that strange sense that foreigners bring, of knowing and being known, but without the irony of the French or the plebeianism of Germans and Scandinavians, bringing a consciousness of being on trial, but without responsibility. . . .

The trial would bring exposure. Reading and discussion would reveal ignorance of English literature. . .

The hour of sitting accepted as a student, talking easily, the right phrases remembering themselves in French and German, would not come again; the sudden outbreak of happiness after mentioning Renan . . . *how* had she suddenly known that he made the Old Testament like a newspaper? *Parfaitement; j'ai toujours été fort intéressé dans la philosophie.* After reading so long ago, not understanding at the time and knowing she would only remember, without words, something that had come from the pages. Per-

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haps that was how students learned; reading and getting only a general impression and finding thoughts and words years afterwards; but how did they pass examinations?

For that moment they had been students together exchanging photographs of their minds. That could not come again. It was that moment that had sent him away at the end of the lesson, plunging lightly upstairs, brumming in his deep voice, and left her singing in the drawing room . . . the best way would be to consider him as something superfluous, to be forgotten all day and presently, perhaps quite soon, to disappear altogether. . . . But before her exposure brought the lessons to an end and sent him away to find people who were as learned as he was, she would have heard more. Tomorrow he would bring down the Spinoza book. But it was in German. They might begin with Renan in English. But that would not be reading English. He would demur and disapprove. English literature. Stopford Brooke. He would think it childish; not sceptical enough. Matthew Arnold. *Emerson*. Emerson would be perfect for reading; he would see that there was an English writer who knew everything. It would postpone the newspapers, and meanwhile she could find out who was Prime Minister and something about the English system of education. He *must* read Emerson; one could insist that it was the purest English and the most beautiful. If he did not like it, it would prove that his idea that the Russians and the English were more alike than any other Europeans was an illusion. Emerson; and the Comet.



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Mr. Shatov stood ceremoniously waiting and bowing as on the previous evening, a stranger again; conversational interchange was far away at the end of some chance opening that the hour might not bring. Miriam clasped her volume; she could fill the time triumphantly in correcting his accent and intonation, after a few remarks about the comet.

Confronting him she could not imagine him related  
50 Emerson. No continental could fully appreciate Emerson; except perhaps Maeterlinck. It would have been better to try something more simple, with less depth of truth in it. Darwin or Shakespeare. But Shakespeare was poetry; he could not go about in England talking Shakespeare. And Darwin was bad, for men.

He listened in his subdued controlled way to her remark and again she saw him surrounded by his world of foreign universities and professors, and wondered for a sharp instant whether she were betraying some dreadful English, middle-class, newspaper ignorance; perhaps there were no longer any comets; they were called by some other name . . . he might know whether there was still a nebular theory and whether anything more had been done about the electrical contact of metals . . . that man in the "*Revue des deux Mondes*" saying that the first outbreak of American literature was unfortunately feminine. Mill thought intuition at least as valuable as ratiocination . . . Mill; he could read Mill. Emerson would be a secret attack on him, an eloquent spokesman for things no foreigner would agree with. "Ah yes," he said thoughtfully, "I always have had great interest for astronomy, but now please tell me,"

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he lifted yesterday's radiant face—had there been yesterday that glow of crimson tie showing under the point of his black beard and the gold watch-chain across the blackness of his waistcoat?—"how I shall obtain admission to the British Moozayum."

Miriam gave instructions delightedly. Mr. Shatov hunched crookedly in his chair, his head thrown up and listening towards her, his eyebrows raised as if he were singing and on his firm small mouth the pursed look of a falsetto note. His brown eyes were filmed, staring averted, as if fixed on some far-away thing that did not move; it was like the expression in the eyes of Mr. Helsing but older and less scornful. There was no scorn at all, only a weary cynically burning knowledge, yet the eyes were wide and beautiful with youth. Yesterday's look of age and professorship had gone; he was wearing a little short coat; in spite of the beard he was a student, only just come from being one amongst many, surrounded in the crowding sociable foreign way; it gave his whole expression a warmth; the edges of his fine soft richly-dented black hair, the contours of his pale face, the careless hunching of his clothes seemed in a strange generous way unknown in England, at the disposal of his fellow-creatures. Only in his eyes was the contradictory lonely look of age. But when they came round to meet hers, his head still reined up and motionless, she seemed to face the chubby upright determination of a baby, and the deep melancholy in the eyes was like the melancholy of a puppy.

"Pairhaps," he said, "one of your doctors shall sairtify me for a fit and proper person."

Miriam stared her double stupefaction. For a

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moment, as if to give her time to consider his suggestion, his smile remained, still deferential but with the determined boldness of a naughty child lurking behind it; then his eyes fell, too soon to catch her answering smile. She could not, with his determined unaverted and now nervously quivering face before her, either discourage the astounding suggestion or resent his complacent possession of information about her.

"I should tell you," he apologized gently, "that Mrs. Bailey has say me you are working in the doctors' quarter of London."

"They are not doctors," said Miriam, feeling stiffly English, and in her known post as dental secretary utterly outside his world of privileged studious adventure, "and you want a householder who is known to you and not a hotel or boarding-house keeper."

"That is very English. But no matter. Perhaps it shall be sufficient that I am a graduate."

"You could go down and see the librarian, you must write a statement."

"That is an excellant idee."

"I am a reader, but not a householder."

"No matter. That is most excellant. You shall pairhaps introduce me to this gentleman. Ah, that is very good. I shall be most happy to find myself in that institution. It is one of my heartmost dreams of England to find myself in the midst of all these leeteraytchoors. . . . When can we go?"

There was a ring on the little finger of the hand that drew from an inner pocket a limp leather pocket-book; pale old gold curving up to a small pimple of jewels. The ringed hand moving above the dip of



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the double watch-chain gave to his youth a strange look of mellow wealthy middle age.

"Ah. I must write in English. Please tell me. But shall we not go at once, this evanink?"

"We can't; the reading-room closes at eight."

"That is very English; well; tell me what I shall write."

Miriam watched as he wrote with a small quick smoothly moving pencil. The pale gold of the ring was finely chased. The small cluster of tiny soft-toned pearls encircling and curving up to a small point of diamonds were set in a circlet of enamel, a marvellous rich deep blue. She had her Emerson ready when the writing was done.

"What is Emerson?" he enquired, sitting back to restore his book to its pocket. "I do not know this writer." His reared head had again the look of heady singing, young, confronting everything, and with all the stored knowledge that can be given to wealthy youth prepared to meet her precious book. If he did not like it there was something shallow in all the wonderful continental knowledge; if he found anything in it; if he understood it at all, they could meet on that one little plot of equal ground; he might even understand her carelessness about all other books.

"He is an American," she said, desperately handing him the little green volume.

"A most nice little volume," he demurred, "but I find it strange that you offer me the book of an American."

"It is the most perfect English that you could have. He is a New Englander, a Bostonian; the Pilgrim

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Fathers; they kept up the English of our best period. The fifteenth century."

"That is most interesting," he said gravely, turning the precious pages. "Why have I not heard of this man? In Russia we know of course their Thoreau, he has a certain popularity amongst extremists, and I know also of course their great poet, Vitmann. I see that this is a kind of philosophical disquisitions."

"You could not possibly have a better book for style and phraseology in English, quite apart from the meaning."

"No," he said, with reproachful gravity, "preciosity I cannot have."

Miriam felt out of her depth. "Perhaps you won't like Emerson," she said, "but it will be good practice for you. You need not attend to the meaning."

"Well, ach-ma, we shall try, but not this evanink; I have headache, we shall rather talk; let us return to the soobjects we have discussed yesterday." He rested his elbows on the table, supporting his chin on one hand, his beard askew, one eye reduced to a slit by the bulge of his pushed up cheek, his whole face suddenly pallid and heavy, sleepy-looking.

"I am *most*-interested in philosophy," he said, glowering warmly through his further, wide-open eye. "It was very good to me. I found myself most excited after our talk of yesterday. I think you too were interested?"

"Yes, wasn't it extraordinary?" Miriam paused to choose between the desire to confess her dread of confronting a full-fledged student and a silence that would let him go on talking while she contemplated a series of reflections extending forward out of sight

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from his surprising admission of fellowship. It was so strange, an exhilaration so deep and throwing such wide thought-inviting illumination, to discover that he had found yesterday exceptional; that he too, with all his wonderful life, found interest scattered only here and there. Meanwhile his eagerness to rekindle without fresh fuel, the glow of yesterday, confessed an immaturity that filled her with a tumult of astonished solicitude.

"You must let me correct your English today," she said, busily taking him with her voice by the hand in a forward rush into the empty hour that was to test, perhaps to destroy the achievement of their first meeting. "Just now you said 'the subjects we have discussed yesterday.' 'Have' is the indefinite past; 'yesterday,' as you used it, is a definite point of time; *passé défini*, we *discussed* yesterday. We have always discussed these things on Thursdays. We always discussed these things on Thursdays. Those two phrases have different meanings. The first indefinite because it suggests the discussions still going on, the second definite referring to a fixed period of past time."

She had made her speech at the table and glanced up at him apologetically. Marvelling at her unexpected knowledge of the grammar of her own tongue, called into being she supposed by the jar of his inaccuracy, she had for a moment almost forgotten his presence.

"I perceive," he said shifting his chin on his hand to face her fully, with bent head and moving beard-point; his voice came again as strange, from an immense distance; he was there like a ghost; "that

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you are in spite of your denials a most excellent institutrice. Ach-ma! My English is bad. You shall explain me all these complications of English verb-mixing; but tonight I am reeally too stupid."

"It is all quite easy; it only appears to be difficult."

"It shall be easy; you have, I remark, a more clear pure English than I have met; and I am very intelligent. It shall not be difficult."

Miriam hid her laughter by gathering up one of his books with a random question. But how brave. Why should not people admit intelligence? . . . It was a sort of pamphlet, in French.

"Ah, that is most interesting; you shall at once read it. He is a most intelligent man. I have hear this lectchoor——"

"I heard, I heard," cried Miriam.

"Yes; but excuse a moment. Really it is interstink. He is one of the most fine lecturours of Sorbonne; membre de l'Académie; the soobject is l'Attention. Ah it is better we shall speak in French."

"Nur auf deutsch kann man gut philosophieren," quoted Miriam disagreeing with the maxim and hoping he would not ask where she had read it.

"That is not so; that is a typical German arrogance. The French have some most distinguished p-psychologues, Taine, and more recently, Tarde. But listen."

Miriam listened to the description of the lecture. For a while he kept to his careful slow English and her attention was divided between her growing interest in the nature of his mistakes, her desire to tell him that she had discovered that he spoke Norman English in German idiom with an intonation that she supposed must be Russian, and the fascination of watching for

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the fall of the dead-white, black-fringed eyelids on to the brooding face, between the framing of each sentence. When he passed into French, led by a quotation which was evidently the core of the lecture, she saw the lecturer, and his circle of students and indignantly belaboured him for making, and them for quietly listening to the assertion that it is curious that the human faculty of attention should have originated in women.

Certainly she would not read the pamphlet. However clever the man might be, his assumptions about women made the carefully arranged and solemnly received display of research, irritatingly valueless. And Mr. Shatov seemed to agree, quite as a matter of course. . . . "Why should he be *surprised?*" she said when he turned for her approval. "*How*, surprised," he asked laughing, an easy deep bass chuckle, drawing his small mouth wide and up at the corners; a row of small square even teeth shining out.

"Ach-ma," he sighed, with shining eyes, looking happily replete, "he is a *great* p-sycho-physiologiste," and passed on to eager narration of the events of his week in Paris. Listening to the strange inflections of his voice, the curiously woven argumentative sing-song tone, as if he were talking to himself, broken here and there by words thrown out with explosive vehemence, breaking defiantly short as if to crush opposition in anticipation, and then again the soft almost plaintive sing-song beginning of another sentence, Miriam presently heard him mention Max Nordau and learned that he was something more than the author of *Degeneration*. He had written *Die Conventiellen Lügen der Kulturmenscheit*,

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which she immediately must read. He had been to see him and found a truly marvellous white-haired old man, with eyes, *alive*; so young and vigorous in his enthusiasm that he made Mr. Shatov at twenty-two feel *old*.

After that she watched him from afar, set apart from his boyhood, alone with her twenty-five years on the borders of middle-age. *There* was the secret of the youthful untested look that showed in certain poses of his mature studious head. His beard and his courtly manner and the grave balanced intelligence of his eyes might have belonged to a man of forty. Perhaps the Paris visit had been some time ago. No; he had come through France for the first time on his way to England. . . . She followed him, growing weary with envy, through his excursions in Paris with his father; went at last to the Louvre, mysterious grey building, heavy above a row of shops, shutting in works of "art," in some extraordinary way understood, and known to be "good"; and woke to astonishment to find him sitting alone, his father impatiently gone back to the hotel, for an hour in motionless contemplation of the Venus, having *wept* at the first sight of her in the distance. The impression of the Frenchman's lecture was driven away. All the things she had heard of on these two evenings were in the past.

He was in England now, through all the wonders of his continental life, England had beckoned him. Paris had been just a stage on his confident journey; and the first event of his London life would be Saturday's visit to the British Museum. His eager foreign interest would carry the visit off . . . and she



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remembered, growing in the thought suddenly animated towards his continued discourse, that she could show him the Elgin Marbles.

The next evening, going down to the drawing-room at the appointed time, Miriam found it empty and lit only by the reflection from the street. . . . Standing in the dim blue light she knew so well, she passed through a moment of wondering whether she had ever really sat talking in this room with Mr. Shatov. It seemed so long ago. His mere presence there had been strange enough; youth and knowledge and prosperity where for so long there had been nothing but the occasional presence of people who were in mysterious disgraceful difficulties, and no speech but the so quickly acrimonious interchange of those who are trying to carry things off. Perhaps he was only late. She lit the gas and leaving the door wide sat down to the piano. The loose flatly vibrating shallow tones restored her conviction that once more the house was as before, its usual intermittent set of boarders, coming punctually to meals, enduring each other downstairs in the warmth until bedtime, disappearing one by one up the unlighted stairs, having tea up here on Sundays, and for her, the freedom of the great dark house, the daily oblivion of moving about in it, the approach up the quiet endlessly dreaming old grey street in the afternoon, late at night, under all the changes of season and of weather; the empty drawing-room that was hers every Sunday morning with its piano, and always there at night within its open door, inviting her into its blue-lit stillness; her room upstairs, alive now and

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again under some chance spell of the weather, or some book which made her feel that any life in London would be endurable for ever that secured her room with its evening solitude, now and again the sense of strange fresh invisibly founded beginnings; often a cell of torturing mocking memories and apprehensions, driving her down into the house to hear the dreadful voices, giving out in unchanged accents, their unchanging words and phrases.

Someone had come into the room, bringing a glow of life. She clung to her playing; he need not know that she had been waiting for him. A figure was standing almost at her side; with that voice he would certainly be musical . . . the sturdiness and the plaintiveness were like the Russian symphonies; he could go to the Queen's Hall; his being late for the lesson had introduced music. . . . She broke off and turned to see Sissie Bailey, waiting with sullen politeness to speak. Mr. Shatov was out. He had gone out early in the afternoon and had not been seen since. In Sissie's sullenly worried expression Miriam read the Baileys' fear that they had already lost hold of their helpless new boarder. She smiled her acceptance and suggested that he had met friends. Sissie remained grimly responseless and presently turned to go. Resuming her playing, Miriam wondered bitterly where he could have lingered, so easily dropping his lesson. What did it matter? Sooner or later he was bound to find interests; the sooner the better. But she could not go on playing; the room was cold and black; horribly empty and still. . . . Mrs. Bailey would know where he had set out to go this afternoon; she would have directed him. She played on zealously



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for a decent interval, closed the piano and went downstairs. In the dining-room was Sissie, alone, mending a table-cloth.

To account for her presence Miriam enquired whether Mrs. Bailey were out. "Mother's lying down," said Sissie sullenly, "she's got one of her headaches." Miriam sympathized. "I want her to have the doctor; it's no use going on like this." Miriam was drawn irresistibly towards Mrs. Bailey, prostrate in her room with her headache. She went down the hall feeling herself young and full of eager strength, sinking with every step deeper and deeper into her early self; back again by Eve's bedside at home, able to control the paroxysms of pain by holding her small head grasped in both hands; she recalled the strange persistent strength she had felt, sitting with her at night, the happiness of the moments when the feverish pain seemed to run up her own arms and Eve relaxed in relief, the beautiful unfamiliar darkness of the midnight hours, the curious sharp savour of the incomprehensible book she had read lying on the floor by the little beam of the nightlight. She could surely do something for Mrs. Bailey; meeting her thus for the first time without the barrier of conversation; at least she could pit her presence and her sympathy against the pain. She tapped at the door of the little room at the end of the passage. Presently a muffled voice sounded and she went in. A sense of release enfolded her as she closed the door of the little room; it was as if she had stepped off the edge of her life, out into the wide spaces of the world. The room was lit feebly by a small lamp turned low within its smoky chimney. Its small space was so

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crowded that for a moment she could make out no recognizable bedroom shape; then a figure rose and she recognized Mr. Gunner standing by a low camp bedstead. "It's Miss Henderson," he said quietly. There was a murmur from the bed and Miriam bending over it saw Mrs. Bailey's drawn face, fever-flushed, with bright wild eyes. "We think she ought to have a doctor," murmured Mr. Gunner. "M'm" said Miriam absently.

"Good of you," murmured Mrs. Bailey thickly. Miriam sat down in the chair Mr. Gunner had left and felt for Mrs. Bailey's hands. They were cold and trembling. She clasped them firmly and Mrs. Bailey sighed. "Perhaps you can persuade her," murmured Mr. Gunner. "M'm" Miriam murmured. He crept away on tiptoe. Mrs. Bailey sighed more heavily. "Have you tried anything?" said Miriam dreamily, out into the crowded gloom.

The room was full of unsightly necessities, all old and in various stages of dilapidation, the overflow of the materials that maintained in the rest of the house the semblance of ordered boarding-house life. But there was something vital, even cheerful in the atmosphere; conquering the oppression of the crowded space. The aversion with which she had contemplated, at a distance, the final privacies of the Baileys behind the scenes, was exorcised. In the house itself there was no life; but there was brave life battling in this room. Mrs. Bailey would have admitted her at any time, with laughing apologies. Now that her entry had been innocently achieved, she found herself rejoicing in the disorder, sharing the sense Mrs. Bailey must have, every time she retired to this lively centre,

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of keeping her enterprise going for yet one more day. She saw that to Mrs. Bailey the house must appear as anything but a failure and the lack of boarders nothing but unaccountable bad luck. "A compress or hot fomentations, hot fomentations could not do harm and they might be very good."

"Whatever you think, my dear; good of you," murmured Mrs. Bailey feebly. "Not a bit," said Miriam looking about wondering how she should carry out, in her ignorance, this mysteriously suggested practical idea. There was a small fire in the little narrow fireplace, with a hob on either side. Standing up, she caught sight of a circular willow pattern sink basin with a tap above it and a cupboard below set in an alcove behind a mound of odds and ends. The room was meant for a sort of kitchen or scullery; and it had been the doctors' only sitting-room. How had the four big tall men, with their table and all their books, managed to crowd themselves in?

In the dining-room Sissie responded with uncealed astonishment and gratitude to Miriam's suggestions and bustled off for the needed materials, lingering, when she brought them, to make useful suggestions, affectionately controlling Mrs. Bailey's feeble efforts to help in the arrangements, and staying to supply Miriam's needs, a little compact approving presence.

As long as the hot bandages were held to her head Mrs. Bailey seemed to find relief and presently began to murmur complaints of the trouble she was giving. Miriam, longing to sing, threatened to withdraw unless she would remain untroubled until she was better, or weary of the treatment. At ten o'clock

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she was free from pain, but her feet and limbs were cold.

"You ought to have a pack all over," said Miriam judicially.

"That's what I felt when you began," agreed Mrs. Bailey.

"Of course. It's the even temperature. I've never had one, but we were all brought up homeopathically." Sissie went away to make tea.

"Was you?" said Mrs. Bailey drawing herself into a sitting posture. Miriam launched into eager description of the little chest with its tiny bottles of pilules and tinctures and the small violet-covered book about illnesses strapped into its lid; the home-life all about her as she talked. . . . Belladonna; aconite; she was back among her earliest recollections, feeling small and swollen and feverish; Mrs. Bailey, sitting up, with her worn glad patient face seemed to her more than ever like her mother; and she could not believe that the lore of the book and the little bottles did not reside with her.

"Aconite," said Mrs. Bailey, "that was in the stuff the doctor give me when I was so bad last year." That was all new and modern. Mrs. Bailey *must* see if she could only rapidly paint them for her, the home scenes all about the room.

"They *use* those things in the British Pharmacopœia, but they pile them in in bucketsful with all sorts of minerals," she said provisionally, holding to her pictures while she pondered for a moment over the fact that she had forgotten until tonight that she was a homeopath.

Mr. Gunner came quietly in with Sissie and the tea,

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making a large party distributed almost invisibly in the gloom beyond the circle of dim lamplight. There was a joyful urgency of communication in the room. But the teacups were filled and passed round before the accumulated intercourse broke through the silence in a low-toned remark. It seemed to come from everyone and to bear within it all the gentle speech that had sounded since the world began; light spread outward and onward from the darkened room.

Taking her share in the remarks that followed, Miriam marvelled. Unqualified and unprepared, utterly undeserving as she felt, she was aware, within the controlled tone of her slight words, of something that moved her, as she listened, to a strange joy. It was within her, but not of herself; an unknown vibrating moulding force. . . .

When Sissie went away with the tea-things, Mr. Gunner came to the bedside to take leave. Sitting on the edge of the bed near Miriam's chair he bent murmuring; Miriam rose to go; Mrs. Bailey's hand restrained her. "I think you know," whispered Mr. Gunner, "what we are to each other." Miriam made no reply; there was a golden suffusion before her eyes, about the grey pillow. Mrs. Bailey was clutching her hand. She bent and kissed the hollow cheek, receiving on her own a quick eager mother's kiss, and turned to offer her free hand to Mr. Gunner who painfully wrung it in both his own. Outside in the darkness St. Pancras clock was striking. She felt a sudden sadness. What could they know of each other? What could any man and woman know of each other?

When Mr. Gunner had gone and she was alone with Mrs. Bailey, the trouble lifted. It was Mrs.

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Bailey who had permitted it, she who would steer and guide, and she was full of wisdom and strength. She could unerringly guide anyone through anything. But how had she arrived at permitting such an extraordinary thing?

"Poor boy," sighed Mrs. Bailey.

"Why 'poor boy'? Nothing of the sort," said Miriam.

"Well, it's a comfort to me you think that; I've worried meself ill over him. I've been keeping him off for over a twelvemonth."

"Well it's all settled now so you needn't worry any more."

"It's his age I look to; he's only two and twenty," flushed Mrs. Bailey.

"He looks older than that."

"He does look more than his age, I allow; he never had any home; his father married a second time; he says this is the first home he's had; he's never been so happy." All the time he had been halting about in the evenings in the dining-room, never going out and seeming to have nothing to do but a sort of malicious lying-in-wait to make facetious remarks, he had been feeling at home, happy at home, and growing happier and happier. Poor little man, at home in nothing but the dining-room at Tansley Street. . . . Mrs. Bailey. . . . Was he good enough for her? She had not always liked or even approved of him.

"Well; that's lovely. Of course he has been happy here."

"That's all very well for the past; but there's many breakers ahead. He wants me to give up and have a little home of our own. But there's my chicks. I



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can't give up till they're settled. I've told him that. I can't do less than my duty by *them*."

"Of course not. He's a dear. I think he's splendid." But how generously glowing the struggling house seemed now; compared to a life alone, in some small small corner, with Mr. Gunner. . .

"Bless 'im. He's only a clurk, poor boy, at thirty-five weekly."

"Of course clerks don't make much, unless they have languages. He ought to learn one or two languages."

"He's not over strong. It's not money I'm thinking of—" she flushed and hesitated and then said with a girlish rush, "I'd manage; once I'm free I'd manage. I'd work my fingers to the bone for 'im." Marvellous, for a little man who would go on writing yours of yesterday's date to hand as per statement enclosed; nothing in his day but his satisfaction in the curves and flourishes of his handwriting . . . and then home comforts, Mrs. Bailey always there, growing more worn and ill and old; an old woman before he was thirty.

"But that won't be for a long time yet; though Polly's doing splendid."

"Is she?"

"Well, I oughtn't to boast. But they've wrote me she's to be pupil-teacher next year."

"*Polly?*"

"Polly," bridled Mrs. Bailey and laughed with shining eyes. "The chahld's not turned fifteen yet, dear little woman blesser." Miriam winced; poor little Polly Bailey, to die so soon, without knowing it.

"Oh, that's magnificent." Perhaps it was magnif-



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icent. Perhaps a Bailey would not feel cheated and helpless. Polly would be a pupil-teacher perkily, remaining her same self, a miniature of Mrs. Bailey, already full of amused mysterious knowledge and equal to every occasion.

Mrs. Bailey smiled shyly, "She's like her poor mother; she's got a will of her own." Miriam sat at ease within the tide. . . . Where did women find the insight into personality that gave them such extraordinary prophetic power? She herself had not an atom of it. Perhaps it was matronhood; and Mary hid all these things in her heart. No; aunts often had it, even more than matrons; Mrs. Bailey was so splendidly controlled that she was an aunt as well as a mother to the children. She contemplated the sharply ravaged little head, reared and smiling above the billows of what people called "misfortunes" by her conscious and self-confessed strength of will; yes, and unconscious fairness and generosity, reflected Miriam, and an immovable sense of justice. All these years of scraping and contrivance had not corrupted Mrs. Bailey; she ought to be a judge, and not Mr. Gunner's general servant. . . . Justice is a woman; blindfolded; seeing from the inside and not led away by appearances; men invent systems of ethics, but they cannot weigh personality; they have no individuality, only conformity or non-conformity to abstract systems; yet it was impossible to acknowledge the power of a woman, of any woman she had ever known, without becoming a slave; or to associate with one, except in a time of trouble; but in her deliberate excursion into this little room she was free; all her life lay far away, basking in freedom; spreading out and out,

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illimitable; each space and part a full cup on which no hand might be laid . . . that little man was just a curious foreign voice, which would presently rouse her impatience . . . and just now he had seemed so near. . . . Was she looking at him with Mrs. Bailey's eyes? Mrs. Bailey would say, "Oh yes, I think he's a very nice little man." Beyond his distinction as a well-to-do boarder, he would have, in her eyes, nothing to single him out; she would respect his scholarship, but regarding it as a quality peculiar to certain men; and without the knowledge that it was in part an accident of circumstance. She would see beyond it; she would never be prostrate before it.

But the distant vision of the free life was not Mrs. Bailey's vision; there was something there she could not be made to understand, and would in any way there were words that tried to express it, certainly not approve. Yet why did it come so strongly here in her room? The sense of it was here, somewhere in their intercourse, but she was unconscious of it. . . . Miriam plumed about in the clear centre—where without will or plan or any shapely endeavour in her life, she was yet so strangely accepted and indulged. Mrs. Bailey was glancing back at her from the depths of her abode, her face busy in control of the rills of laughter sparkling in her eyes and keeping, Miriam knew, as she moved, hovering, and saw the fostering light they shed upon the world, perpetual holiday; the reassuring inexhaustible substance of Mrs. Bailey's being.

"It's Sissie I worry about," said Mrs. Bailey. Miriam attended curiously. She's like her dear father; keeps herself to herself and goes on; she's a

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splendid little woman in the house; but I feel she ought to be doing something more."

"She's awfully capable," said Miriam.

"She is. There's nothing she can't turn her hand to. She'll have the lock off a door and mend it and put it on again and put in a pane of glass neater than a workman and no mess or fuss." Miriam sat astonished before the expanding accumulation of qualities.

"I don't know how I should spare her; but she's not satisfied here; I've been wondering if I couldn't manage to put her into the typing."

"There isn't much prospect there," recited Miriam, "the supply is bigger than the demand."

"That is so," assented Mrs. Bailey, "but I see it like this; where there's a will there's a way and one has to make a beginning." Mrs. Bailey had made up her mind. Quite soon Sissie would know typewriting; a marketable accomplishment; she would rank higher in the world than a dental secretary; a lady typist with a knowledge of French. That would be her status in an index. No doubt in time she would learn shorthand. She would go capably about, proud of her profession; with a home to live in, comfortably well off on fifteen shillings a week; one of the increasing army of confident illiterate young women in the city; no, Sissie would not be showy; she would bring life into some office, amongst men as illiterate as herself; as soon as she had picked up "yours to hand" she would be reliable and valuable. . . . Sissie, with a home, and without putting forth any particular effort, would have a place in the world. . . .

"I'll make some inquiries," said Miriam cheerfully.

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Mrs. Bailey thanked her with weary eagerness; she was flushed and flagging; the evening's work was being cancelled by the fascination which had allowed her to go on talking. She admitted a return of her neuralgia and Miriam, remorseful and weary, made her lie down again. She looked dreadfully ill; like someone else; she would go off to sleep looking like someone else, or lie until the morning, with plans going round and round in her head and get up, managing to be herself until breakfast was over. But all the time, she had a house to be in. She was Mrs. Bailey; a recognized centre. Miriam sat alone, the now familiar little room added to the strange collection of her inexplicable life; its lamplit walls were dear to her, with the extraordinary same dearness of all walls seen in tranquillity. She seemed to be responding to their gaze. Had she answered Mrs. Bailey's murmur about going to bed? It seemed so long ago. She sat until the lamp began to fail and Mrs. Bailey appeared to be going to sleep. She crept out at last into the fresh still darkness of the sleeping house. On the first floor there was a glimmer of blue light. It was the street lamp shining in through Mr. Shatov's wide-open empty room. When she reached her own room she found that it was one o'clock. *Already* he had found his way to some horrible haunt. She wrapped her evening round her, parrying the thought of him. There should be no lesson tomorrow. She would be out, having left no message.

When she came in the next evening he was in the hall. He came forward with his bearded courteous emphatically sweeping foreign bow; a foreign pro-

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fessor bowing to an audience he was about to address. "Bitte verzeihen Sie," he began, his rich low tones a little breathless; the gong blared forth just behind him; he stood rooted, holding her with respectful melancholy gaze as his lips went on forming their German sentences. The clangour died down; people were coming downstairs drawing Miriam's gaze as he moved from their pathway into the dining-room, still facing her with the end of his little speech lingering nervously on his features. He was in his frock-coat and shone richly black and white under the direct lamplight; he was even more handsome than she had thought, solidly beautiful, glowing in shapely movement as he stood still and gestureless before her, set off by the shapelessly moving, dinner drawn forms passing into the dining-room. She smiled in response to whatever he may have said and wondered, having apologized for yesterday, in what way he would announce to her the outside engagement for this evening for which he was so shingly prepared. "Zo," he said gravely, "if you are now free, I will almost immediately come up; we shall not wait till eight o'clock." Miriam bowed in response to the sweeping obeisance with which he turned into the dining-room, and ran upstairs. He came up before the end of the first course, before she had had time to test in the large overmantel the shape of her hair that had seemed in the little mirror upstairs accidentally good, quite like the hair of someone who mysteriously knew how to get good effects.

"I have been sleeping," he said in wide cheerful tones as he crossed the room, "all day until now. I

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am a little stupid; but I have very many things to say you. First I must say you," he said more gravely and stood arrested with his coat tails in his hands, in front of the chair opposite to hers at the little table, "that your Emerson is *most-wonderful*."

Miriam could not believe she had heard the deep-toned emphatic words. She stared stupidly at his unconscious thoughtful brow; for a strange moment feeling her own thoughts and her own outlook behind it. She felt an instant's pang of disappointment; the fine brow had lost something, seemed familiar, almost homely. But an immense relief was surging through her. No—Ree—ally, *most-wonderful*," he reiterated with almost reproachful emphasis, sitting down with his head eagerly forward between his shoulders, waiting for her response. "Yes, *isn't* he?" she said encouragingly and waited in a dream while he sat back and drew little volumes from his pocket, his white eyelids downcast below his frowning brow. Would he qualify his praise? Had he read enough to come upon any of the chills and contradictions? However this might be, Emerson had made upon this scholarly foreigner, groping in him with his scanty outfit of language, an overwhelming impression. Her own lonely overwhelming impression was justified. The eyes came up again, gravely earnest. "No," he said, "I find it most difficult to express the profound impression this reading have made on me."

"He isn't a bit original," said Miriam surprised by her unpremeditated conclusion, "when you read him you feel as if you were following your own thoughts."



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"That is so; he is not himself philosophe; I would call him rather, poète; a most remarkable quality of English, *great* dignity and with at the same time a most perfect simplicity."

"He understands everything; since I have had that book I have not wanted to read anything else . . . . except Maeterlinck," she murmured in afterthought, "and in a way he is the same."

"I do not know this writer," said Mr. Shatov, "and what you say is perhaps not quite good. But in a manner I can have some sympathy with this remark. I have read yesterday the whole day; on different omnibuses. Ah. It was for me *most-wonderful*."

"Well, I always feel, all the time, all day, that if people would only read Emerson they would understand, and not be like they are, and that the only way to make them understand what one means would be reading pieces of Emerson."

"That is true; why should you not do it?"

"Quotations are feeble; you always regret making them."

"No; I do not agree," said Mr. Shatov devoutly smiling, "you are wrong."

"Oh, but think of the awful people who quote Shakespeare."

"Ach-ma. People are, in general, silly. But I must tell you you should not cease to read until you shall have read at least some Russian writers. If you possess sensibility for language you shall find that Russian is *most-beautiful*; it is perhaps the most beautiful European language; it is, indubitably, the most rich."



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"It can't be richer than English."

"Certainly it is richer than English. I shall prove this to you, even with dictionary. You shall find that it occur, over and over, that where in English is one word, in Russian is six or seven different, all synonyms, but all with *most* delicate individual shades of nuance . . . the abstractive expression is there, as in all civilized European languages, but there is also in Russian the most immense *variety* of natural expressions, coming forth from the strong feeling of the Russian nature to all these surrounding influences; each word opens to a whole aperçu in this sort . . . and what is most significant is, the great richness, in Russia, of the people-language; there is no other people-language similar; there is in no one language so immense a variety of tender diminutives and intimate expressions of all natural things. None is so rich in sound or so marvellously powerfully colorful. . . . *That* is Russian. Part of the reason is no doubt to find in the immense paysage; Russia is so *vast*; it is inconceivable for any non-Russian. There is also the ethnological explanation, the immense vigour of the people."

Miriam went forward in a dream. As Mr. Shatov's voice went on, she forgot everything but the need to struggle to the uttermost against the quiet strange attack upon English; the double line of evidence seemed so convincing and was for the present unanswerable from any part of her small store of knowledge; but there must be an answer; meantime the suggestion that the immense range of English was partly due to its unrivalled collection of technical terms, derived from English science, commerce, sports, "all the

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practical life-manœuvres," promised vibrating reflection, later.

But somewhere outside her resentful indignation, she found herself reaching forward unresentfully towards something very far-off, and as the voice went on, she felt the touch of a new strange presence in her Europe. She listened, watching intently, far-off, hearing now only a voice, moving on, without connected meaning. . . . The strange thing that had touched her was somewhere within the voice; the sound of Russia. So much more strange, so much wider and deeper than the sound of German or French or any of the many tongues she had heard in this house, the inpouring impression was yet not alien. It was not *foreign*. There was no barrier between the life in it and the sense of life that came from within. It expressed that sense; in the rich, deep various sound and colour of its inflections, in the strange abruptly controlled shapeliness of the phrases of tone carrying the whole along, the voice *was* the very quality he had described, here, alive; about her in the room. It was, she now suddenly heard, the disarming, unforeign thing in the voice of kind commercial little Mr. Rodkin. Then there was an answer. There was something in common between English and this strange language that stood alone in Europe. She came back and awoke to the moment, weary. Mr. Shatov had not noticed her absence. He was talking about Russia. Unwillingly she gave her flagging attention to the Russia already in her mind; a strip of silent sunlight snow, just below Finland, St. Petersburg in the midst of it, rounded squat square white architecture piled solidly beneath a brilliant sky,

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low sledges smoothly gliding, drawn by three horses, bell-spanned, running wildly abreast, along the silent streets or out into the deeper silence of dark, snow-clad wolf-haunted forests that stretched indefinitely down the map; and listened as he drew swift pictures, now north, now south. Vast outlines emerged faintly, and here and there a patch remained, vivid. She saw the white nights of the northern winter, felt the breaking through of spring in a single day. Whilst she lingered at Easter festivals in churches, all rich deep colour blazing softly through clouds of incense, and imagined the mighty sound of Russian singing, she was carried away to villages scattered amongst great tracts of forest, unimaginable distances of forest, the vast forests of Germany small and homely . . . each village a brilliant miniature of Russia, in every hut a holy image; brilliant colouring of stained carved wood, each peasant a striking picture, filling the eye in the clear light, many "most-dignified"; their garments coloured with natural dyes, "the most pure plant-stain colours," deep and intense. She saw the colours, mat and sheenless, yet full of light, taking the light in and in, richly, and turned grievously to the poor cheap tones in all the western shops, clever shining chemical dyes, endless teasing variety, without depth or feeling, cheating the eye of life; and back again homesick to the rich tones of reality. . . . She passed down the winding sweep of the Volga, a consumptive seeking health, and out into the southern plains where wild horses roamed at large, and stayed at a lodge facing towards miles and miles of shallow salt water, sea-gull haunted, and dotted with floating islands of reeds, so matted and interwoven that one could get out from

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the little shallow leaky fishing-boat and walk upon them; and over all a crystal air so life-giving that one recovered. She heard the peasants in the south singing in strong deep voices, dancing by torchlight a wild dance with a name that described the dance. . . .

Throughout the recital were vivid words, each a picture of the thing it expressed. She would never forget them. Russia was *recognizable*. So was every language . . . . but no foreign sound had brought her such an effect of strength and musical beauty and expressiveness combined. That was it. It was the strange number of things that were together in Russian that was so wonderful. In the end, back again in England, sitting in the cold dilapidated room before the table of little books, weary, opposite Mr. Shatov comfortably groaning and stretching, his eyes already brooding in pursuit of something that would presently turn into speech, she struggled feebly with a mournful uneasiness that had haunted the whole of the irrevocable expansion of her consciousness. A *German*, not a Russian ethnologist, and therefore without prejudice, had declared that the Russians were the strongest kinetic force in Europe. He proved himself disinterested by saying that the English came next. The English were "simple and fundamentally sound." Not intelligent; but healthy in will, which the Russians were not. Then why were the Russians more forceful? What was kinetic force? And . . . . mystery . . . . the Russians themselves knew what they were like. "There is in Russia except in the governing and bourgeois classes almost no hypocrisy." What was kinetic. . . . And religion was an "actual force" in Russia! "What is ki——"

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"Ah but you shall at least read some of our great Russian authors . . . at least Tourgainyeff and Tolstoy."

"Of course I have heard of Tolstoy."

"Ah, but you shall read. He has a most profound knowledge of human psychology; the most marvellous touches. In that he rises to universality. Tourgainyeff is more pure Russian, less to understand outside Russia; more academical; but he shall reveal you most admirably the Russian aristocrat. He is cynic-satirical."

"Then he can't reveal *anything*," said Miriam. Here it was again; Mr. Shatov, too, took satire quite unquestioningly; thought it a sort of achievement, worthy of admiration. Perhaps if she could restrain her anger, she would hear at least in some wonderful explanatory continental phrase, what satire really was, and be able to settle with herself why she knew it was in the long run, waste of time; *why* the word satirist suggested someone with handsome horns and an evil clever eye and thin cold fingers. Thin. Swift was probably fearfully thin. Mr. Shatov was smiling incredulously. If he went on to explain she would miss the more important worrying thing. Novels. It was extraordinary that he should. . . .

"I don't care for novels. . . . I can't see what they are about. They seem to be an endless fuss about nothing."

"That may apply in certain cases. But it is a too extreme statement."

"It is extreme. Why not? How can a statement be too extreme if it is true?"

"I cannot express an opinion on English novelistic

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writings. But of Tolstoy it is certainly not true. *No*; it is not in general true that in fictional representations there is no actuality. I have read with my first English teacher in Moscow a story of your Myne-Reade. There was in this story a Scotch captain who remained for me most typical British. He was *very* fine this chap. This presentation here made me the more want what I have want always since a boy; to come to England." Was Mayne Reade a novelist? Those boys' stories were glorious. But they were about the sea; and the fifth form . . . "a noble three-bladed knife, minus the blades" . . .

"There's a thing called the Ebb-Tide," she began, wondering how she could convey her impression of the tropical shore; but Mr. Shatov's attention, though polite, was wandering, "I've read some of Gorki's short stories," she finished briskly. They were not novels; they were alive in some way English books were not. Perhaps all Russian books were. . .

"Ah *Gorrarki*. He is come out direct from the peasantry; very powerfully strange and rough presentations. He may be called the apostle of *misère*."

. . . . the bakery and the yard; the fighting eagles, the old man at the prow of the boat with his daughter-in-law. . . . All *teaching* something. How did people find it out?

"But really I must tell you of yesterday," said Mr. Shatov warmly. "I have made a *Schach-Partei*. That was for me *very good*. It include also a certain exploration of London. That is for me I need not say most *fascinatink*." Miriam listened eagerly. The time was getting on; they had done no work. She had not once corrected him and he was plunging



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into his preliminary story as if their hour had not yet begun. She was to share. . .

"There was on one of these many omnibuses a gentleman who tell me where in London I shall obtain a genuine coffee. Probably you know it is at this Vienna Café, in Holeborne. You do not know this place? *Strange*. It is quite near to you all the time. Almost at your British Museum. Ah; this gentleman has told me too a most funny story of a German who go there proudly talking English. He was waiting; ach they are very slow in this place, and at last he shouts for everyone to hear, Vaiter! Venn shall I become a cup of coffee?"

Miriam laughed her delight apprehensively. "Ah, I like very much these stories," he was saying, his eyes dreamily absent, she feared, on a memory-vista of similar anecdotes. But in a moment he was alive again in his adventure. "It was at London Bridge. I have come all the way, walkingly, to this Café. It is a strange place. Really glahnend; Viennese; very dirrty. But coffee most excellent; just as on the Continent. You shall go there; you will see. Upstairs it is most dreadful. More dirrty; and in an intense gloom of smoke, very many men, ah they are dreadful, I could not describe to you. Like monkeys; but all in Schach-parteis. That shall be very good for me. I am most enthusiastic with this game since a boy."

"Billiards?"

Why should he look so astonished and impatiently explain so reproachfully and indulgently? She grasped the meaning of the movements of his hands. He was a chess-player "a game much older—uralt—

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and the most mental, the only true abstractive game." How differently an English chess-player would have spoken. She regarded his eager contained liveliness. Russian chess-players remained alive. Was chess mental? Pure tactics. Should she declare that chess was a dreadful boring indulgence, leading nowhere? Perhaps he would be able to show her that this was not so. . . . Why do the Germans call two people playing chess a chess-party? "I have met there a man, a Polish doctor. We have made party and have play until the Café close, when we go to his room and continue there to play till the morning. Ah, it was most-beautiful."

"Had you met him before?"

"Oh no. He is in London; stewdye-ink medicine."

"Studdying," said Miriam impatiently, lost in incredulous contemplation. It could not be true that he had sat all night playing chess with a stranger. If it were true, they must both be quite insane . . . . the door was opening. Sissie's voice, and Mr. Shatov getting up with an eager polite smile. Footsteps crossing the room behind her; Mr. Shatov and a tall man shaking hands on the hearthrug; two inextricable voices; Mr. Shatov's presently emerging towards her, deferentially, "I present you Dr. Veslovski." The Polish doctor, gracefully bowing from a cold narrow height, Mr. Shatov, short, dumpy, deeply-radiant little friend, between them; making a little speech, turning from one to the other. The Polish head was reared again on its still cold grey height; undisturbed. . . . Perfect. Miriam had never seen anything so perfectly beautiful. Every line of the head and face harmonious; the pointed beard finishing the lines with an

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expressiveness that made it also a feature, one with the rest. Even the curious long narrow capless flatly-lying foreign boots, furrowed with mud-stiffened cracks and the narrowly cut, thin, shabby grey suit shared the distinction of the motionless reined-in head. Polish beauty. If that were Polish beauty the Poles were the most beautiful people in Europe. Polish; the word suggested the effect, its smooth liquid sheen, sinuous and graceful without weakness . . . the whole world was at home in the eyes; horribly beautiful, abysses of fathomless foreign . . . any kind of known happenings were unthinkable behind those eyes . . . yet he was here; come to play chess with Mr. Shatov who had not expected him until Sunday, but would go now immediately with her permission, to fetch his set from upstairs. She lingered as he hurried away, glancing at the little books on the table. The Emerson was not among them. The invisible motionless figure on the hearthrug had brought her a message she had forgotten in her annoyance at his intrusion. Going from the room towards his dim reflection in the mirror near the door she approached the waiting thought—Mr. Shatov's voice broke in, talking eagerly to Mrs. Bailey on the floor below. From the landing she heard him beg that it might be some *large* vessel, quite voll tea; some drapery to enfold it, and that the gazz might be left alight. They were going to play chess, through the night, in that cold room . . . but the thought was gladly there. The Polish doctor's presence had confirmed Mr. Shatov's story. It had not been a young man's tale to cover an escapade.

## CHAPTER II

SHE hurried through her Saturday morning's work, trying to keep warm. Perhaps it was nervousness and excitement about the afternoon's appointment that made her seem so cold. At the end of her hour's finicking work in Mr. Hanock's empty fireless room, amongst cold instruments and chilly bottles of chemicals she was cold through. There was no one in the house but Mr. Leyton and the cousin; nothing to support her against the coming ordeal. Mr. Leyton had had an empty morning and spent it busily scrubbing and polishing instruments in his warm little room; retiring towards lunch time to the den fire with a newspaper. Shivering over her ledgers in the cold window space, she bitterly resented her inability to go out and get warm in an A.B.C. before meeting Mr. Shatov in the open. Impossible. It could not be afforded; though this morning all the absolutely essential work could be finished by one o'clock. It was altogether horrible. She was not sure that she was even supposed to stay for lunch on Saturday. The day ended at one o'clock; unless she were kept by some urgent business, there was no excuse. Today she must have finished everything before lunch to keep her appointment. It could not be helped; and at least there was no embarrassment in the presence of Mr. Leyton and the boy. She

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would even lock up and put on her outdoor things and go down in them. It would not occur to them that she need not have stayed to lunch . . . her spirits rose as she moved about putting things in the safe. She dressed in Mr. Leyton's warm room, washing her hands in very hot water, thawing, getting warm . . . the toque looked nice in his large mirror, quite stylish, not so home made . . . worldly people always had lunch in their outdoor things, even when they were staying in a house. Sarah said people ought always to wear hats, especially with evening dress . . . picture hats, with evening dress, made pictures. It was true, they would, when you thought of it. But Sarah had found it out for herself; without opportunities; it came, out of her mind through her artistic eyes. . . . Miriam recalled smart middle-aged women at the Corries, appearing at lunch in extraordinary large hats, when they had not been out; that was the reason. It helped them to carry things off; made them talk well and quickly, with the suggestion that they had just rushed in from somewhere or were just going to rush off. . . . She surveyed herself once more. It was true; lunch even with Mr. Leyton and the cousin would be easier with the toque and her black coat open showing the white neckerchief. It gave an impression of hurry and gaiety. She was quite ready and looked about for entertainment for the remaining moments. Actually; a book lying open on Mr. Leyton's table, a military drill-book of course. No. *What* was this. Wondrous Woman, by J. B. G. Smithson. Why so many similar English initials? Jim, Bill, George, a superfluity of mannishness . . . an attack of course; she scanned pages and

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headings; chapter upon chapter of peevish facetiousness; the whole book written deliberately against women. Her heart beat angrily. What was Mr. Leyton doing with such a book? Where had it come from? She read swiftly, grasping the argument. The usual sort of thing; worse, because it was colloquial, rushing along in modern everyday language and in some curious way not badly written. . . .

Because some women had corns, feminine beauty was a myth; because the world could do without Mrs. Hemans' poetry, women should confine their attention to puddings and babies. The infernal complacent cheek of it. This was the kind of thing middle-class men read. Unable to criticize it, they thought it witty and unanswerable. That was the worst of it. Books of this sort were read without anyone there to point things out. . . . It ought to be illegal to publish a book by a man without first giving it to a woman to annotate. But what was the answer to men who called women inferior because they had not invented or achieved in science or art? On whose authority had men decided that science and art were greater than anything else? The world could not go on until this question had been answered. Until then, until it had been clearly explained that men were always and always partly wrong in all their ideas, life would be full of poison and secret bitterness. . . . Men fight about their philosophies and religions, there is no certainty in them; but their contempt for women is flawless and unanimous. Even Emerson . . . positive and negative, north and south, male and female . . . why *negative*? Maeterlinck gets nearest in knowing that women can live, hardly at all, with



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men, and wait, have always been waiting, for men to come to life. How can men come to life; always fussing? How could the man who wrote this book? Even if it were publicly burned and he were made to apologize; he would still go about asquint . . . lunch was going to be late, just today, of course. . . .

"I say."

"*What* do you say," responded Miriam without looking up from her soup. Mr. Leyton had a topic; she could keep it going with half her attention and go restfully on, fortifying herself for the afternoon. She would attack him about the book one day next week. . . .

"I say. What say you George?"

"Me? All right. I say, I say, I say, anything you like m'lord."

Miriam looked up. Mr. Leyton was gazing and grinning.

"What's the matter?" she snapped. His eyes were on her toque.

"*Where* did you get that hat? *Where did* you get that tile," sang the cousin absently, busy with his lunch.

"I made it if you *must* know," said Miriam. The cousin looked across; large expressionless opinionless eyes.

"Going out in it?" What *was* the matter; Mr. Leyton had never noticed anything of hers before; either it was too awful, or really rather effective and he unconsciously resented the fact of her going about in an effect.

"Why not?"

"Well; looks rather like a musical comedy."

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"Cheek," observed the cousin; "I do call that cool cheek; you're balmy, Leyton." Mr. Leyton looked no more; that was his genuine brotherly opinion; he thought the toque showy. It was the two wings, meeting in the middle of the front; he meant pantomime; he did not know the wings were cheap; he was shocked by the effectiveness; it *was* effective; cheap and hateful; but it suited her; pantomime effects were becoming. Where was the objection?

"That's all right. I'm glad. I like musical comedies."

"Oh; if you're satisfied. If you don't mind looking risky."

"I say, look here old man, steady on," blushed the cousin.

"Well. What do you think yourself? Come on."

"I think it's jolly pretty."

"I think it's jolly *fast*."

Miriam was quite satisfied. The cousin's opinion went for nothing; a boy *would* like pantomime effects. But the hat was neither ugly nor dowdy. She would be able to tear down Oxford Street, no matter how ugly the cold made her feel, looking *fast*. It would help her to carry off meeting Mr. Shatov. *He* would not notice hats. But the extraordinary, rather touching thing was that Mr. Leyton should trouble at all. As if she belonged to his world and he were in some way responsible.

"All right Mr. Leyton; it's fast; whatever that may mean."

"Old Leyton thinks hats ought to be slow."

"Look here young fellow me lad, you teach your——"

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"Great-grandfather not to be rude."

"I fail to see the rudeness; I've merely expressed an opinion and I believe Miss Henderson agrees with it."

"Oh absolutely; ab-solute-ly;" chanted Miriam scornfully. "Pray don't worry about the pace of my millinery Mr. Leyton." That was quite good, like a society novel. . . .

"Well as I say if you're *satisfied*."

"Ah. That's another matter. The next time I want a hat I'll go to Bond Street. So easy and simple."

"Seen the paper today, George?"

"Paper? Noospaper? No time."

"Seen the B. M. J.?"

"No sir."

"And you an aspiring medico."

"Should be an expiring medico," yodelled George "if I read all those effusions."

"Well. More disclosures from Schenck."

"Who's he, when he's at home?"

"You know. Schenck, man; *Schenk*. You know."

"Oh, sorry; all right. What's he babbling about now?"

"Same thing; only more of it," giggled Mr. Leyton.

"If it's half past I must go," announced Miriam peremptorily. Two watches came out.

"Then I advise you to hook it pretty sharp; it's twenty to. You'd better *read* that article, my son." Miriam folded her serviette.

"Righto. Don't worry."

"*Why* all this mystery? Good morning," said Miriam departing.

"Good morning," said the two voices. Mr. Leyton

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held the door open and raised his voice to follow her up the stairs. "We're discussing matters somewhat beyond your ken."

She could not stay. She could not have tackled him if she had stayed. Anger was perhaps as funny as embarrassment. He would have been shocked at the idea of her quietly considering the results of Schenck's theory, if it proved to be true; beyond her ken, indeed. It was hateful to have to leave that; he *ought* to be robbed of the one thing that he imagined gave him an advantage in the presence of women. The women in his world *would* be embarrassed by the discussion of anything to do with the reproduction of the race. *Why?* Why were the women embarrassed and the men always suggestive and facetious? If only the men could realize what they admitted by their tone; what attitude towards life. . . .

It was a bitter east-wind; the worst kind of day there was. All along Oxford Street were women in furs, serene, with smooth warm faces untroubled by the bleak black wind, perhaps even enjoying the cold. Miriam struggled along, towards the cruel east, shivering, her face shrivelled and frozen and burning, her brain congealed. If she were free she could at least have a cup of coffee and get warm and go into the Museum and be warm all the afternoon. To meet a stranger and have to be active and sociable when she was at her worst. He would be wrapped in the advantage of a fur-lined coat, or at least astrachan, and be able to think and speak. He would wonder what was the matter; even his careless foreign friendliness would not survive her frightful appearance. Yet when a clock told her the appointed time was

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past, the torment of the wind grew sharper in the thought that she might miss him. There was the Holborn Library, as he had described. There was no one there, the pavement was empty; he had given her up and gone; had perhaps never come. She was relieved. She had done her best. Fate had saved her; her afternoon was her own. But she must show herself, perhaps he might be sheltering just inside the door. The doorway was empty. There was a man leaning against the lamp-post. She scanned him unwillingly, lest he should turn into Mr. Shatov; but he produced only the details of the impression she had taken before she glanced, a shabby, sinister-looking Tottenham Court Road foreign loafer, in yellow boots, an overcoat of an evil shade of brown and a waiter's black-banded grey felt hat; but she had paused and glanced and of course his eye was immediately upon her and his lounging figure upright as she swept across the pavement to gain the road and flee the displeasing contact. He almost ran into her; trotting . . . *ah*, I am glad . . . it *was* Mr. Shatov. . . .

Looking like that, she was now to take him in amongst the British Museum officials, and the readers she knew by sight and who knew her; introduce him to the librarian. She scanned him as he eagerly talked, looking in vain for the presence she had sat with in the drawing-room; the eyes had come back; but that was all, and she could not forget how brooding, almost evil, they had looked just now. They gleamed again with intelligence; but their brilliant beauty shone from a face that looked almost dingy, in the hard light; and yellowish under the frightful hat peaked down, cutting off his forehead. He was gloveless and in his

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hands, grimed with walking in the winter streets, he held a paper bag of grapes which he ate as he talked, expelling the skins and flinging them from him as he walked . . . he looked just simply disreputable. Even his voice had gone; raised against the traffic it was narrow and squeaky; a disreputable foreigner, plunging carelessly along, piercing her ear with mean broken English. She shouted vague replies in French; in yelled French his voice was even more squeaky; but the foreign tongue gave a refuge and a shape to their grouping; she became a sort of guide; anyone could be that to any sort of foreigner.

In the cloak room were the usual ladies comfortably eating lunch from sandwich tins and talking, talking, talking to the staff, moving endlessly to and fro amongst the cages of hanging garments; answering unconsciously. The mysterious everlasting work of the lunching ladies, giving them the privilege of being all day at the museum, always in the same seats, accepted and approved, seemed to make no mark upon them; they bore themselves just as they would have done anywhere, the same mysteriously unfailing flow of talk, the mysterious basis of agreement with other women, the same enthusiastic discussions of the weather, the cases in the newspapers, their way of doing this and that, their opinions of places and people. . . . They seemed to have no sense of the place they were in, and yet were so extraordinarily at home there, and most wonderful of all, serene, with untroubled eyes and hands in the thin stuffy heat of the cloakroom.

These thoughts came every time; the sense of Mr. Shatov, busy, she hoped, washing his face and hands down beyond the stairs leading to the unknown



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privacies at the other end of the corridor, could not banish them; the bearing of these ladies was the most mysterious thing in the museum. In this room she was always on her guard. It was jolly after roaming slowly across the courtyard towards the unfailing unchanging beauty of the great grey pillars, pigeon-garlanded, to wander through the out-branching hall to where the lame commissioner held open the magic door, and fly along the passage and break in here, permitted, cold and grimy and ruffled from the street, and emerge washed and hatless and rested, to saunter down the corridor and see ahead, before becoming one of them, the dim various forms sitting in little circles of soft yellow light under the high mysterious dome. But in one unguarded moment in this room all these women would turn into acquaintances, and the spell of the Museum, springing forth perhaps for a while, intensified, would disappear for ever. They would turn it into themselves, varying and always in the end, in silence, the same. In solitude it remained unvarying yet never twice alike, casting its large increasing charm upon them as they moved distant and unknown.

In the lower cloak-room there was always escape; no sofas, no grouped forms. Today it stood bare, its long row of basins unoccupied. She turned taps joyously; icy cold and steaming hot water rushing to cleanse her basin from its revealing relics. They were all the same, and all the soaps, save one she secured from a distant corner, sloppy. Surveying, she felt with irritated repugnance, the quality, slapdash and unaware, of the interchange accompanying and matching the ablutions. A woman came out of

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a lavatory and stood at her side, also swiftly restoring a basin. It was *she*. . . . Miriam envied the basin. . . . Freely watching the peaceful face in the mirror, she washed with an intense sense of sheltering companionship. Far in behind the peaceful face serene thoughts moved, not to and fro, but outward and forward from some sure centre. Perfectly screened, unknowing and unknown, she went about within the charmed world of her inheritance. It was difficult to imagine what work she might be doing, always here, and always moving about as if unseeing and unseen. Round about her serenity any kind of life could group, leaving it, as the foggy grime and the dusty swelter of London left her, unsullied and untouched. But for the present she was here, as if she moved, emerging from a spacious many-windowed sunlight flooded house whose happy days were in her quiet hands, in clear light about the spaces of a wide garden. Yet she was aware of the world about her. It was not a matter of life and death to her that she should be free to wander here in solitude. For those women she would have a quiet unarmed confronting manner, at their service, but holding them off without discourtesy, passing on with cup unspilled. Nothing but music reached her ears, everything she saw melted into a background of garden sunlight.

She was out of sight, drying her hands, lighting up the corner of the room where the towels hung. . . . If Mr. Shatov were on *her* hands, she would not be regretting that the afternoon could hold no solitary wanderings. She made no calculations; for she could not be robbed. That was strength. She was gone. Miriam finished her operations as though

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she remained, drying her hands unhurriedly, standing where she had stood, trying to survey the unforetellable afternoon with something of her sustained tranquillity.

He would probably be plunging up and down the corridor with a growing impatience. . . . There he was, unconcernedly waiting; his singing determined child's head reared hatless above the dreadful overcoat, the clear light of the corridor upon its modest thought-moulded dignity . . . distinguished . . . that was what he was. She felt unworthy, helplessly inadequate, coming up the corridor to claim him. She was amongst the people passing about him before he saw her; and she caught again the look of profound reproachful brooding melancholy seated in his eyes, so strangely contradicting his whole happy look of a child standing at a party, gazing, everything pouring into its wide eyes; dancing and singing within itself, unconscious of its motionless body.

"Here we are," she said avertedly as he came eagerly forward.

"Let us quickly to this official," he urged in his indoor voice.

"All right; this way." He hurried along at her side, beard forward, his yellow boots plunging in long rapid strides beneath his voluminously floating overcoat.

She resented the librarian's official manner; the appearance of the visitor, the little card he promptly produced, should have been enough. Stud. Schtudent, how much more expressive than *stewardent* . . . to be able to go about the world for years, so-and-so, stud. . . . all doors open and committed to nothing. She asserted herself by making suggestions in French.

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Mr. Shatov responded politely, also in French, and she felt the absurdity of her eager interference, holding him a prisoner, hiding his studious command of English, in order to flourish forth her knowledge. "We are not afraid even of Russian, if Mr. Shatov prefers to use his own tongue," said the librarian. Miriam flashed a suspicious glance. He was smiling a self-conscious superior English smile. It soured into embarrassment under her eye.

"It is no matter," said Mr. Shatov gently, "you shall immediately say me the requisite formulæ which I shall at once write." He stood beautiful, the gentle unconsciously reproachful prey of English people unable to resist their desire to be effective. They stood conquered, competing in silent appreciation, as he bent writing his way into their forgotten library.

"Now I am pairfectly happy," he said as he passed through the swing doors of the reading-room. His head was up radiantly singing, he was rushing trustfully forward, looking at nothing, carrying her on, close at his side, till they reached the barrier of the outmost catalogue desk. He pulled up facing her, with wide wild eyes looking at nothing. "We shall at once take *Anakarayninna* in *English*," he shouted in an enthusiastic whisper.

"We must choose seats before we get books," murmured Miriam. There was plenty to do and explain; the revelation of her meagre attack on the riches of the library need not yet come. Were they to read together? Had he reached his goal "midst all those literatures" to spend his time in showing her Tolstoy? He followed her absently about as she filled in the time while they waited for their book, by showing all

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she knew of the routine of the library. "There shall of course," he said in a gruff explanatory tone, arresting her near the entrance to the central enclosure, "be a quite exhaustive system of catalogue, but I find there is too much *formalities*; with all these little baskets." "Ssh," begged Miriam leading him away. She drifted to the bookshelves, showing him the one shelf she knew on the south side; there was a reader on a ladder at the very shelf. "Carlyle's French Revolution is up there," she said confidently. "Na, na," he growled reproachfully, "this is a most purely unreliable fictional history, a tour de force from special individual prejudices. You should take rather Thiers." She piloted him across to her shelf on the north side to point out the *Revue des deux Mondes* and the *North American Review*. He paused, searching along the shelves. "*Ah. Here is books.*" He drew out and flung open a heavy beautifully printed volume with wide margins on the pages; she would show him the clever little folding arrangements to hold heavy volumes; "You do not know these?" he demanded of her silence; "ah that is a great pity; it is the complete discours de l'Académie française; you shall immediately read them; ah, they are the most *perfect* modèles." She glanced at the open page beginning "Messieurs! Le sentiment de fierté avec laquelle je vous"; it was a voice; exactly like the voice of Mr. Shatov. He stood with the heavy open volume, insisting in his dreadfully audible whisper on wonderful French names prefixed to the titles of addresses, fascinating subjects, one of them Mr. *Gladstone!* He looked French as he spoke; a brilliantly polished Frenchman. Why had he not gone to France? He was German too,

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with a German education and yet with some impatiently unexplained understanding and contempt—for Germany. Why was he drawn towards England? That was the mysterious thing. What was the secret of the reverence in this man towards England and the English? He was not an anarchist. There he stood, Russian, come from all that far-away beauty, with German and French culture in his mind, longingly to England, coming to Tansley Street; unconsciously bringing her her share in his longed-for arrival and its fulfilments. She watched as he talked, marvelling at the undeserved wealth offered to her in the little figure discoursing so eagerly over the cumbrous volume, and at this moment the strange Russian book was probably waiting for them.

It was a big thick book. Miriam sat down before it. The lights had come on. The book lay in a pool of sharp yellow light; Tolstoy, surrounded by a waiting gloom; the secret of Tolstoy standing at her side, rapidly taking off his overcoat. He drew up the chair from the next place and sat close, flattening out the book at the first chapter and beginning to read at once, bent low over the book. She bent too, stretching her hands out beyond her knees to make herself narrow, and fastening on the title. Her anticipations fell dead. It was the name of a woman. . . . Anna; of all names. Karenine. The story of a woman told by a man with a man's ideas about people. But Anna Karenine was not what Tolstoy had written. Behind the ugly feebleness of the substituted word was something quite different, strong and beautiful; a whole legend in itself. Why had the translator altered the surname? Anna Karayninna



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was a line of Russian poetry. His word was nothing, neither English nor French, and sounded like a face-cream. She scanned sceptically up and down the pages of English words, chilled by the fear of detecting the trail of the translator.

Mr. Shatov read steadily, breathing his enthusiasm in gusts, pausing as each fresh name appeared, to pronounce it in Russian and to explain the three names belonging to each character. They were all expressive; easy to remember because of their expressiveness. The three-fold name, giving each character three faces, each turned towards a different part of his world, was fascinating. . . . Conversation began almost at once and kept breaking out; strange abrupt conversation different to any she had read elsewhere. . . . What was it? She wanted to hold the pages and find out; but Mr. Shatov read on and on, steadily turning the leaves. She skipped, fastening upon the patches of dialogue on her side of the open page, reading them backwards and forwards, glancing at the solid intervening portions to snatch an idea of the background. What was the mysterious difference? Why did she feel she could hear the tone of the voices and the pauses between the talk; the curious feeling of things moving and changing in the air that is always there in all conversations? Her excitement grew, drawing her upright to stare her question into the gloom beyond the lamp.

"Well?" demanded Mr. Shatov.

"It's fascinating."

"What have I told you? That is *Tolstoy*," he said proudly; "but this is a most vile translation. All these *nu* and *da*. Why not simply *well* and *yes*; and

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boszhe moi is quite simply, my God. But this preliminary part is not so interesting as later. There is in this book the self-history of Tolstoy. He is Layvin, and Kitty is the Countess Tolstoy. That is all most wonderful. When we see her in the early morning; and the picture of this wedding. There is only Tolstoy for those marvellous touches. I shall show you."

"Why does he call it Anna Karayninna?" asked Miriam anxiously.

"Certainly. It is a most masterly study of a certain type of woman."

The fascination of the book still flickered brightly; but far away, retreated into the lonely incommunicable distance of her mind. It seemed always to be useless and dangerous to talk about books. They were always about something else. . . . If she had not asked she would have read the book without finding out it was a masterly study of Anna. Why must a book be a masterly study of some single thing? Everybody wisely raving about it. . . . But if one never found out what a book was a masterly study of, it meant being ignorant of things every one knew and agreed about; a kind of hopeless personal ignorance and unintelligence; reading whole books through and through, and only finding out what they were about by accident, when people happened to talk about them, and even then, reading them again, and finding principally quite other things, which stayed, after one had forgotten what people had explained.

"I see," she said intelligently. The readers on either side were glancing angrily. Miriam guiltily recalled her own anger with people who sat together

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murmuring and hissing. But it felt so different when you were one of the people. The next time she felt angry in this way she would realize how interested the talkers were, and try to forget them. Still it was wrong. "We must not talk," she breathed. He glanced about and returned to his shuffling of pages.

"Heere it is," he exclaimed in a guttural whisper far more distinct than his mutterings; "I shall show you this wonderful passage."

"Ssh, yes," murmured Miriam firmly, peering at the indicated phrase. The large warm gloom of the library, with its green-capped pools of happy light, was stricken into desolation as she read. She swung back to her world of English books and glanced for comfort at the forms of Englishmen seated in various attitudes of reading about the far edges of her circle of vision. But the passage was inexorably there; poison dropping from the book into the world; foreign poison, but translated and therefore read by at least some Englishmen. The sense of being in arms against an onslaught already achieved, filled her with despair. The enemy was far away, inaccessibly gone forward spreading more poison. She turned furiously on Mr. Shatov. She could not disprove the lie; but at least he should not sit there near her, holding it unconcerned.

"I can't see anything wonderful. It isn't true," she said.

"Ah, that is very English," beamed Mr. Shatov.

"It is. *Any* English person would know that it is not true."

Mr. Shatov gurgled his laughter. "Ah, that is very naïve."

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"It may be. That doesn't make any difference."

"It makes the difference that you are inexperienced," he growled gently. That was true. She had no experience. She only *knew* it was not true. Perhaps it was true. Then life grew bleak again. . . . It was not true. But it was true for men. Skimmed off the surface, which was all they could see, and set up neatly in forcible quotable words. The rest could not be shown in these clever, neat phrases.

"But I find the air here is most evil. Let us rather go have tea."

Astonishment melted into her pride in leading him down through the great hall and along the beloved corridor of her solitary paces, out into the gigantic granite smile of the Egyptian gallery, to the always sudden door of the refreshment room.

"If I got locked into the Museum at night I should stay in this gallery," she said unable to bear companionship in her sanctuary without extorting some recognition of its never-failing quality.

"It is certainly impressive, in a crude way," admitted Mr. Shatov.

"They are so absolutely peaceful," said Miriam struggling on behalf of her friends with her fury at this extraordinary judgment. It had not before occurred to her that they were peaceful and that was not enough. She gazed down the vista to discover the nature of the spell they cast. "You can see them in clear light in the desert," she exclaimed in a moment. The charm grew as she spoke. She looked forward to being alone with them again in the light of this discovery. The chill of Mr. Shatov's indifferent response to her explanation was buried in

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her private acknowledgment that it was he who had forced her to discover something of the reason of her enchantment. He forced her to think. She reflected that solitude was too easy. It was necessary for certainties. Nothing could be known except in solitude. But the struggle to communicate certainties gave them new life; even if the explanation were only a small piece of the truth. . . . "Excuse me I leave you a moment," he said, turning off through the maze of little figures near the door. The extraordinary new thing was that she *could* think, untroubled, in his company. She gratefully blessed his disappearing form.

"I'm going to have toast and jam," she announced expansively when the waitress appeared.

"Bring me just a large pot of tea and some kind of sweetmeat," said Mr. Shatov reproachfully.

"Pastries," murmured Miriam.

"What is *pastries*," he asked mournfully.

"Pâtisseries," beamed Miriam.

"Ah no," he explained patiently, "it is not that at all; I will have simply some small things in sugar."

"No pastries; cake," said the waitress, watching herself in the mirror.

"Ach bring me just *tea*," bellowed Mr. Shatov.

Several people looked round, but he did not appear to notice them and sat hunched, his overcoat coming up behind beyond his collar, his arms thrust out over the table, ending in grubby clasped hands. In a moment he was talking. Miriam sat taking in the change in the feeling of the familiar place under the influence of his unconcerned presence. There were the usual strangers strayed in from the galleries,

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little parties, sitting exposed at the central tables near the door; not quite at home, their eyes still filled with the puzzled preoccupation with which they had wandered and gazed, the relief of their customary conversation held back until they should have paid, out of their weary bewilderment, some tribute of suitable comment; looking about the room, watching in separate uneasiness for material to carry them past the insoluble problem. They were unchanged. But the readers stood out anew; the world they had made for her was broken up. Those who came in twos and sat at the more sequestered tables, maddening her with endless conversations at cross purposes from unconsidered assumptions, were defeated. Their voices were covered by Mr. Shatov's fluent monologue, and though her own voice, sounding startlingly in the room, seemed at once only an exclamatory unpractised reproduction of these accustomed voices, changing already their aspect and making her judgment of them rock insecurely in her mind, it was threaded into his unconcerned reality and would presently be real.

But the solitary readers, sitting in corners over books, or perched, thoughtfully munching and sipping, with their backs to the room, on the high stools at the refreshment counter, and presently getting down to escape untouched and free, through the swing door, their unlifted eyes recovering already, through its long glass panels, the living dream of the hugely moving galleries, reproached her for her lost state.

Mr. Shatov's dreaming face woke to prevent her adding milk to his tea, and settled again, dwelling with his far-off theme. She began listening in detail to screen her base interest in her extravagant fare.



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"It is a remarkable fact," he was saying and she looked up, astonished at the sudden indistinctness of his voice. His eyes met hers severely, above the rim of his cup, "but of almost universal application," he proceeded thickly, and paused to produce between his lips a saturated lump of sugar. She stared, horrified. Very gravely, unattained by her disgust, he drew in his tea in neat noiseless sips till the sugar disappeared . . . when he deftly extracted another lump from the basin and went on with his story.

The series of lumps, passing one by one without accident through their shocking task, softened in some remarkable way the history of Tourgainyeff and Madame Viardot. The protest that struggled in her to rise and express itself was held in check by his peculiar serenity. The frequent filling of his cup and the selection of his long series of lumps brought no break in his concentration. . . . Above the propped elbows and the cup held always at the level of his lips, his talking face was turned to hers. Expressions moved untroubled through his eyes.

When they left the tea-room he plunged rapidly along as if unaware of his surroundings. The whole Museum was there, unexplored, and this was his first visit. He assented indifferently to her suggestion that they should just look at the Elgin Marbles, and stood unmoved before the groups, presently saying with some impatience that here, too, the air was oppressive and he would like to go into the freshness.

Out in the street he walked quickly along brumming to himself. She felt they had been long acquainted; the afternoon had abolished embarrassments, but

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he was a stranger. She had nothing to say to him; perhaps there would be no more communications. She looked forward with uneasiness to the evening's lesson. They were both tired; it would be an irretrievable failure to try to extend their afternoon's achievement; and she would have to pass the intervening time alone with her growing incapability, while he recovered his tone at the dinner-table. The thought of him there, socially alive while she froze in her room, was intolerable. She too would go in to dinner . . . their present association was too painful to part upon. She bent their steps cheerfully in the direction of home. "Excuse me," he said suddenly, "I will take here fruits," and he disappeared into a greengrocer's shop emerging presently munching from an open bag of grapes. . . .

Supposing books had no names. . . . Villette had meant nothing for years; a magic name until somebody said it was Brussels . . . she was impressed by St. Paul's dome in the morning because it was St. Paul's. That spoilt the part about the journey; waking you up with a start like the end of a dream. St. Paul's sticking out through the text; some one suddenly introduced to you at a gathering, standing in front of you, blocking out the general sense of things; until you began to dance, when it came back until you stopped, when the person became a person again, with a name, and special things had to be said. St. Paul's could not be got into the general sense of the journey; it was a quotation from another world; a smaller world than Lucy Snowe and her journey.

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Yet it *would* be wonderful to wake up at a little inn in the city and suddenly see St. Paul's for the first time. Perhaps it was one of those journey moments of suddenly seeing something celebrated, and missing the impression through fear of not being impressed enough; and trying to impress your impression by telling of the thing by name . . . everybody had that difficulty. The vague shimmer of gas-lit people around the table all felt things without being able to express them . . . she glowed towards the assembled group; towards every one in the world. For a moment she looked about in detail, wanting to communicate her thought and share a moment of general agreement. Everybody was talking, looking spruce and neat and finished, in the transforming gaslight. Each one something that would never be expressed, all thinking they were expressing things and not knowing the lonely look visible behind the eyes they turned upon the world, of their actual selves as they were when they were alone. But they were all saying things they wanted to say . . . they *did* express themselves, in relation to each other; they grew in knowledge of each other, in approval or disapproval, tested each other and knew, behind their strange immovable positive conversations about things that were all matters of opinion perpetually shifting, in a marvellous way each others' characters. They also knew after the first pleasant moment of meeting eyes and sounding voices when one tried to talk in their way, that one was playing them false. The glow could live for awhile when one had not met them for some time; but before the end of the meeting one was again condemned, living in heavy silence,

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whilst one's mind whirled with the sense of their clear visions and the tantalizing inclination to take, for life, the mould of one or other point of view.

How *obliviously* they all talked on. She thanked them. With their talk flowing across the table, giving the central golden glow of light a feeling of permanence, her failures in life, strident about the room, were visible and audible only to herself. If she could remain silent, they would die down, and the stream of her unworthy life would merge, before he appeared, into a semblance of oneness with these other lives. . . . She caught the dark Russian eyes of Mr. Rodkin sitting opposite. He smiled through his glasses his dry, sweet, large-eyed smile, his head turned listening to his neighbour. She beamed her response, relieved, as if they had had a long satisfactory conversation. He would have understood . . . in spite of his commercial city-life. He accepted everybody. He was the central kindness of the room. No wonder Mrs. Bailey was so fond of him and leant upon his presence, in spite of his yawning hatred of Sundays. He was illuminated; she had his secret at last given her by Mr. Shatov. *Russian* kindness. . . . Russians understand silence and are not afraid of it? Kindly silence comes out of their speech, and lies behind it, leaving things the same whatever has been said? This would be truer of him than of Mr. Shatov . . . moy word. Shatov at the station with his father. You never saw such a thing. Talking to the old boy as if he was a porter; snapping his head off whenever he spoke. . . . She pulled up sharply. If she thought of him, the fact that she was only passing the time would

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become visible . . . what was that just now, opening; about silence?

There is no need to go out into the world. Everything is there without anything; the world is added. And always whatever happens there is everything to return to. The pattern round her plate was life, alive, everything . . . what was that idea I used to have? Enough for one person in the world would be enough for everybody . . . how did it go? It was so clear, while the voice corneted out spoiling the sunshine, . . . "oh yes we were *very* jolly; very jolly party, talking all the time. Miss Hood's song sounding out at intervals, *Halcyon* weather." . . . "Do you ever feel how much there is everywhere?" "Nachah's abundance?" "No. I don't mean that. I mean that nearly everything is wasted. Not things, like soap; but the meanings of things. If there is enough for one person there is enough for everybody." "You mean that one happy man makes the whole universe glad?" "He does. But I don't mean that. I mean—everything is wasted all the time, while people are looking about and arranging for more things." "You would like to simplify life? You feel that man needs but little here below?" "He doesn't need *anything*. People go on from everything as if it were nothing and never seem to know there is anything." "But isn't it just the stimulus of his needs that keeps him going?" "Why need he keep going? That is just my point." "Je né vois pas la nécessité, you would say with Voltaire?" "The necessity of living? Then why didn't he hang himself." "I suppose because he taugh in song

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what he learned in sorrow." . . . How many people knew that Maeterlinck had explained in words what life was like inside? Seek ye first the Kingdom . . . the test is if people want you at their death-beds. None of these people would want me at their death-beds. Yet they all ask deliberate questions, shattering the universe. Maeterlinck would call them innocent questions about the weather and the crops, behind which they gently greet each other. . . . Women always know their questions are insincere, a treachery towards their silent knowledge. . . .

He must read the chapter on silence and then the piece about the old man by his lamp. That would make everything clear . . . where was he all this time? Dinner was nearly over. Perhaps he was going out. She contemplated her blank evening. His voice sounded in the hall. How inconvenient for people with very long eyelashes to have to wear glasses she thought, engrossing herself in a sudden vision of her neighbour's profile. He was coming through the hall from seeing somebody out of the front door. If she could be talking to some one she would feel less huge. She tried to catch Mr. Rodkin's eye to ask him if he had read Tolstoy. Mr. Shatov had come in, bowing his deep-voiced greeting, and begun talking to Mr. Rodkin before he was in his chair, as if they were in the middle of a conversation. Mr. Rodkin answered at once without looking at him, and they went on in abrupt sentences one against the other, the sentences growing longer as they talked.

Sissie did not hear the remark about the weather because she too was attending to the rapid Russian sentences. She was engrossed in them, her pale



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blue eyes speculative and serene. Miriam watched in swift glances. The brilliant colour that Mr. Shatov had seemed to distribute when he sat down, had shrunk to himself. He sat there warm and rich, with easy movements and easily moving thoughts, his mind far away, his features animated under his raised carelessly singing eye-brows, by his irascible comments on Mr. Rodkin's rapped-out statements. The room grew cold, every object stiff with lifeless memory, as they sat talking Mr. Rodkin's business. Every one sitting round the table was clean-cut, eaten into by the raw edge of the winter night, gathered for a moment in the passing gas-lit warmth, to separate presently and face an everlasting renewed nothingness. . . . The charm of the Russian words, the fascination of grasping the gist of the theme broke in vain against the prevailing chill. If the two should turn away from each other and bend their glowing faces, their strangely secure foreign independence towards the general bleakness, its dreadful qualities would swell to a more active torment, all meanings lost in empty voices uttering words that no one would watch or explain. There was a lull. Their conversation was changing. Mr. Shatov had sat back in his chair with a Russian word that hung in the air and spread music. His brows had come down and he was glancing thoughtfully about the table. She met Mr. Rodkin's eyes and smiled and turned again to Sissie with her remark about the weather. Sissie's face came round surprised. She disagreed, making a perfect comment on the change that left Miriam marvelling at her steady ease of mind. She agreed in an enthusiastic paraphrase, her mind busy on the hidden source of her random

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emphasis. It could rest, everything could rest for awhile, for a little time to come, for some weeks perhaps. . . . But he would bring all those books; with special meanings in them that every one seemed to understand and agree about; real at the beginning and then going off into things and never coming back. Why could she not understand them? Finding things without following the story was like being interested in a lesson without mastering what you were supposed to master and not knowing anything about it afterwards that you could pass on or explain. Yet there *was* something, or why did school which had left no knowledge and no facts seem so alive? Why did everything seem alive in a way it was impossible to explain? Perhaps part of the wrong of being a lazy idiot was being happy in a way no one else seemed to be happy.

If one was an idiot, people like Mr. Shatov would not. . . . He looked straight across, a swift observant glance. She turned once more towards Sissie making herself smilingly one with the conversation that was going on between her and her further neighbour and listened eagerly across the table; "*Gracieuse*," Mr. Shatov was saying at the end of a sentence, dropping from objection to restatement. Mr. Rodkin had asked him if he did not think her pretty. That would be his word. He would have no other word. Mr. Shatov had looked, considering the matter for the first time. "*Gracieuse*." Surely that was the very last thing she could be. But he thought it.

Grace was a quality, not an appearance. Strong-minded and plain. That, she knew, was the secret

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verdict of women; or, doesn't know how to make the best of herself. She pondered, seeking in vain for any source of grace. Grace was delicacy, refinement, little willowy cattish movements of the head, the inner mind fixed always on the proprieties, making all the improprieties visible, . . . streaming from the back view of their unconscious hair. . . .

A gracieuse effect means always deliberate *behaving*. Madame de Something. But people who keep it up can never let thoughts take their course. They must behave to their thoughts as they behave to people. When they are by themselves they can only go on mincing quietly, waiting for their next public appearance. When they are not talking they wait in an attitude, as if they were talking; ready to behave. Always on guard. Perhaps that was what Mr. Wilson meant when he said it was the business of women to be the custodians of manners. . . . Their "sense of good form, and their critical and selective faculties." Then he had no right to be contemptuous of them. . . . "Donald Braden . . . lying across the dinner table . . . a drink sodden hull, swearing that he would never again go to a dinner-party where there were no ladies." . . . "Good *talk* and particularly good *stories* are not expected of women, at dinner tables. It's their business to *steer* the conversation and head it off if it gets out of bounds." . . . To simper and watch while the men were free to be themselves, and then step in if they went beyond bounds. In other words to head the men off if they talked "improperly"; thus showing their knowledge of improprieties . . . "tactfully" ignoring them and leading on to something else with a

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gracious pose. Those were the moments when the improprieties streamed from their hair. . . . Somebody saying ssh, superior people talking together, modern friends-in-council, a week end in a beautiful house, *subjects* on the menu, are you high church or low church, the gleam of a woman's body through water. "Ssh." *Why?* . . .

But her impression to himself was good. A *French* impression; that was the extraordinary thing.

Without any consideration that was the impression she had made. Perhaps every one had a sort of style, and people who liked you could see it. The style of one's family would show, to strangers as an unknown strange outside effect. Every one had an effect. . . . She had an *effect*, a stamp, independent of anything she thought or felt. It ought to give one confidence. Because there would certainly be some people who would not dislike it. But perhaps he had not observed her at all until that moment and had been misled by her assumption of animation.

If I tried to be gracious, I could never keep it up, because I always forget that I am visible. She called in her eyes, which must have been staring all the time blankly about the table, so many impressions had she gathered of the various groups, animated now in their unconscious relief at the approaching end of the long sitting. Here again was one of those moments of being conscious of the strange fact of her incurable illusion, and realizing its effects in the past and the effects it must always have if she did not get away from it. Nearly always she must appear both imbecile and rude, staring, probably with her mouth half open, lost. Well-brought-up children were *trained* out of it. No one had dared to try and train her for

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long. They had been frightened, or offended, by her scorn of their brisk cheerful pose of polite interest in the *surface* of everything that was said. It was not worth doing. Polite society was not worth having. Every time one tried for awhile, holding oneself in, thinking of oneself sitting there as others were sitting, consciousness came to an end. It meant having opinions. Taking sides. It presently narrowed life down to a restive discomfort. . . .

Jan went about the streets thinking she was invisible . . . "and then quite suddenly I saw myself in a shop mirror. *My dear*. I got straight into an omnibus and went home. I could not stand the sight of my hips." But with people, in a room, she never forgot she was there.

The sight of Mr. Shatov waiting for her under the gas in the drawing-room gathered all her thoughts together, struggling for simultaneous expression. She came slowly across the room, with eyes downcast to avoid the dimly-lit corner where he stood, and sought rapidly amongst the competing threads of thought for some fragment that could be shaped into speech before he should make the communication she had seen waiting in his face. The sympathetic form must listen and make some understanding response. She felt herself stiffening in angry refusal to face the banishment of her tangled mass of thought by some calmly oblivious statement, beginning nowhere and leading them on into baseless discussion, impeded on her part by the pain of unstated vanishing things. They began speaking together and he halted before her formal harsh-voiced words.

"There is always a bad light on Saturday evenings

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because nearly every one goes out," she said, and looked her demand for his recognition of the undischarged burden of her mind impatiently about the room.

"I had not observed this," he said gently, "but now I see the light is indeed very bad." She watched him as he spoke, waiting, counting each syllable. He paused, gravely consulting her face; she made no effort to withhold the wave of anger flowing out over the words that stood mocking her on the desolate air, a bridge, carrying them up over the stream of her mind and forward, leaving her communications behind for ever. She waited, watching cynically for whatever he might offer to her dumbness, wondering whether it surprised him, rebuked as she regarded him, by his unchanged gentle lustre.

"Oh *please*," he said hurriedly, his downcast inturnd smile suddenly irradiating his forehead, bringing down the eyebrows that must have gone singing thoughtfully up as he spoke about the light . . . a request of some kind; one of his extraordinary unashamed demands. . . . "You must help me. I must immediately pawn my watch. Where is a pawning shop?"

Miriam stared her consternation.

"Ah, no," he said, his features working with embarrassment, "it is not for myself. It is my friend, the Polish Doctor, who was only now here," Miriam gazed, plunging on through relief into a chaos of bewildered admiration.

"But you hardly know him," she exclaimed, sitting down for more leisurely contemplation.

"That is not the point," he said seriously, taking the chair on the other side of the little table. "Poor



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fellow, he is not long in London, and has almost no friends. He is working in abstruse researchings, needing much spendings on materials, and is threatened by his landlady to leave his apartments."

"Did he tell you this?" said Miriam sceptically recalling the Polish head, its smooth cold perfect beauty and indifference.

"Most certainly he told me. He must immediately have ten pounds."

"Perhaps you would not get so much," persisted Miriam. "And suppose he does not pay it back?"

"You are mistaken. The watch, with the chain, is worth more than the double this sum." His face expressed a grave simple finality.

"But it is a *shame*," she cried, jealously eyeing the decoration that seemed now to have been an essential part of their many meetings. Without this mark of opulence, he would not be quite the same. . . .

"Why a shame?" demanded Mr. Shatov, with his little abrupt snorting chuckle. "I shall again have my watch when my father shall send me the next portion of my allowance." He was not counting on the return of the money! Next month, with his allowance, he would have the watch and forget the incident. . . . Wealth made life safe for him. People could be people to him; even strangers; not threats or problems. But even a wealthy Englishman would not calmly give ten pounds to a disreputable stranger . . . he would suspect him even if he were not disreputable. It *might* be true that the Pole was in honest difficulties. But it was impossible to imagine him really working

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at anything. Mr. Shatov did not feel this at all. . . .

"I'm afraid I don't know any pawn shops," she said, shrinking even from the pronunciation of the word. She scanned her London. They had always been there . . . but she had never noticed or thought of them. . . . "I don't remember ever having seen one; but I know you are supposed to recognize them," here was strange useful knowledge, something picturesque floating in from somewhere . . . "by three gold balls hanging outside . . . I *have* seen one," they were talking now, the Polish Doctor was fading away. "Yes . . . on a bus," his wide child's eyes were set impersonally on what she saw, "somewhere down by Ludgate Circus."

"I will at once go there," he said sitting leisurely back with dreaming eyes and his hands thrust into his pockets.

"Oh no," she cried, thrusting off the disaster, "it would be *closed*."

"That is bad," he reflected, "Ach, no matter. I will write to him that I come on Monday."

"He would not get your letter until Monday."

"That is true. I did not think of this."

There must be pawn shops quite near; in the Tottenham Court Road. They would still be open. Not to suggest this would be to be responsible if anything happened to the Pole. . . . Thrusting down through the numbed mass of her forgotten thoughts to the quick of her nature came the realization that she was being tested and found wanting . . . another of those moments had come round. . . . She glanced into the open abyss at her own form staring up from its depths, and through her brain flew, in clear record,

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decisive moments of the past; her self, clearly visible, clothed as she had been clothed, her poise and bearing as she had flinched and fled. Here she was, unchanged, not caring what happened to the man, so long as her evening was not disturbed . . . she was a murderess. This was the hidden truth of her life. Above it her false face turned from thing to thing, happy and forgetful for years, until a moment came again to show her that she could face and let slip the risk of anything to any one anywhere, rather than the pain of renouncing personal realization. Already she was moving away. A second suggestion was in her mind and she was not going to make it. She glanced enviously at the unconscious kindness lolling in the opposite chair. It was clear to its depths; unburdened by spectres of remembered cruelty. . . . But there was also something else that was different . . . easy circumstances; the certainty, from the beginning, of self-realization. . . .

"Perhaps some one in the house could tell you." Oh *stupidity*; blurting out *anything* to hide behind the sound of voices.

"Possibly. But it is a delicate matter. I could not for instance mention this matter to Mrs. Bailey."

"Do you like him? Didn't you find him amongst those dreadful men looking like monkeys?"

"At this Vienna café. Ah indeed it is dreadful there upstairs."

"He is very handsome."

"The Poles are perhaps the most beautiful of European peoples. They have also *immense* courage" . . . unsuspecting thoughtfully talking face, lifting her up and out again into light and air. . . . "But

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the Pole is undoubtedly the most *treacherous* fellow in Europe." Grave live eyes flashed across at her, easily, moulding the lounging form into shapeliness. "He is at the same time of the most distinguished mentality." Why should any one help a distinguished mentality to go on being treacherous? "And in particular is this true of the Polish *Jew*. There are in all European universities amongst the very most distinguished professors and students very many Polish Jews." Le Juif Polonais . . . *The Bells*. It was strange to think of Polish Jews going on in modern everyday life. . . . But if Poles were so evil. . . . That was Dr. Veslovsky's expression. Cold evil.

"There was an awful thing last week in Woburn Place."

"Yes?"

"Mrs. Bailey told me about it. There was a girl who owed her landlady twenty-five shillings. She threw herself out of her bedroom window on the top floor because her landlady spoke to her about it."

"That is *terrible*," whispered Mr. Shatov. His eyes were dark with pain; his face shrunk as if with cold. "That could *never* happen in Russia," he said reproachfully.

"Why not?"

"No. In Russia such a thing is impossible. And in student circles most particularly. This young girl living in this neighbourhood without salary was probably some sort of student."

"Why? She might have been a governess out of work or a poor clerk. Besides I thought people were always committing suicide in Russia."

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"That is of course a gross exaggeration. There are certainly suicides in Russia as everywhere. But in Russia suicide, which does certainly occur in abnormally high frequency amongst the young intelligentsia, arises from a trouble of *spirit*. They are psychopath. There comes some spiritual crisis and—phwtt— . . . It is characteristic of the educated Slav mind to lose itself in the face of abstractive insolubilities. But for need of *twenty-five shillings*. I find in this something peculiarly horrible. In midst of your English civilization it is pure-barbaric."

"There has not been any civilization in the world yet. We are still all living in caves." The quotation sounded less convincing than at Wimpole Street. . . .

"That is too superficial. Pardon me, but it implies a too slight knowledge of what has been in the past and what still persists in various developmental stages." Miriam felt about among the statements which occurred to her in rapid succession, all contradicting each other. Yet somebody in the world believed each one of them. . . . Mr. Shatov was gravely waiting, as if for her agreement with what he had just said. Far away below her clashing thoughts was something she wanted to express, something he did not know, and that yet she felt he might be able to shape for her if only she could present it. But between her and this reality was the embarrassment of a mind that could produce nothing but quotations. She had no mind of her own. It seemed to be there when she was alone; only because there was no need to express anything. In speech she could produce only things other people had said and with which she did not agree. None of them

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expressed the underlying thing. . . . Why had she not brought down Maeterlinck?

Mr. Shatov's quiet waiting had ended in a flow of eager talk. She turned unwillingly. Even he could go on, leaving things unfinished, talking about something else. . . . But his mind was steady. The things that were there would not drop away. She would be able to consider them . . . watching the effect of the light of other minds upon the things that floated in her own mind; so dreadfully *few* now that he was beginning to look at them; and all ending with the images of people who had said them, or the bindings of books where she had found them set down . . . yet she felt familiar with all points of view. Every generalization gave her the clue to the speaker's mind . . . wanting to hear no more, only to criticize what was said by pointing out, whether she agreed with it or no, the opposite point of view. . . .

She smiled encouragingly towards his talk, hurriedly summoning an appearance of attention into her absent eyes while she contemplated his glowing pallor and the gaze of unconscious wide intelligence, shining not only towards her own, but also with such undisturbed intentness upon what he was describing. She could think later on, next year, when he had gone away leaving her to confront her world with a fresh armoury. As long as he stayed, he would be there, without effort or encouragement from her, filling her spare hours with his untired beauty, drawing her along his carefully spun English phrases, away from personal experiences, into a world going on independently of them; unaware of the many



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scattered interests waiting for her beyond this shabby room, and yet making them shine as he talked, newly alight with rich superfluous impersonal fascination, no longer isolated, but vivid parts of a whole, growing more and more intelligible as he carried her further and further into a life he saw so distinctly, that he made it hers, too quickly for her to keep account of the inpouring wealth. . . .

She beamed in spacious self-congratulation and plunged into the midst of his theme in holiday mood. She was in a theatre, without walls, her known world and all her memories spread, fanwise about her, all intent on what she saw, changing, retreating to their original form, coming forward, changing again, obliterated, and in some deep difficult way challenged to renewal. The scenes she watched opened out one behind the other in clear perspective, the earlier ones remaining visible, drawn aside into bright light as further backgrounds opened. The momentary sound of her own voice in the room encouraging his narrative, made no break; she dropped her remarks at random into his parentheses, carefully screening the bright centres as they turned one by one into living memories. . . .

Suddenly she was back withering in the cold shabby room before the shock of his breaking off to suggest with a swift personal smile that she herself should go to Russia. For a moment she stared at him. He waited, smiling gently. It did not matter that he thought her worthy. . . . The conviction that she had already been to Russia, that his suggestion was foolish in its recommendation of a vast superfluous undertaking, hung like a veil between

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her and the experiences she now passed through in imagining herself there. The very things in the Russian student circles that had most appealed to her, would test and find her out. She would be one of those who would be mistrusted for not being sufficiently careless about dress and hair. It would not suit her to catch up her hair with one hairpin. She would not be strong enough to study all day and half the night on bread and tea. She was sure she could not associate perpetually with men students, even living and sharing rooms with them, without the smallest flirtation. If she were wealthy like he, she would not so calmly accept having all things in common; poor she would be uneasy in dependence on other students. She sat judged. There was a quality behind all the scenes, something in the Russians that she did not possess. It was the thing that made him what he was. . . . It answered to a call that was being made all the time to everyone, everywhere. Yet why did so many of them *drink*?

"Well?" said Mr. Shatov. The light was going down. "*What* is this?" he asked staring up impatiently at the lessening flame. "Ah it is simply *stupid*." He hurried away and Miriam heard his voice shouting down to Mrs. Bailey from the staircase as he went, and presently in polite loud-toned remonstrance from the top of the basement stairs. The gas went up, higher than it had been before. It must be eleven. It was not fair to keep the gas going for two people. She must wind up the sitting and send him away.

"What a piece of English stupidity," he bellowed gently, coming back across the room.

"I suppose she is obliged to do it," said Miriam

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feeling incriminated by her failure to resent the proceeding in the past.

“How *obliged?*”

“She has had an awful time. She was left penniless in Weymouth.”

“That is bad; but it is no cause for *stupidity.*”

“I know. She doesn’t understand. She managed quite well with lodgers; she will never make boarders pay. It’s no use giving her hints. The house is full of people who don’t pay their bills. There are people here who have paid nothing for eighteen months. She has even lent them money.”

“Is it possible?” he said gravely.

“And the Irish journalist *can’t* pay. He is a home-ruler.”

“He is a most distinguished-looking man. Ah but she is *stupid.*”

“She can’t *see,*” said Miriam—he was *interested*; even in *these* things. She dropped eagerly down amongst them. The whole evening and all their earlier interchange stood far off, shedding a relieving light over the dismal details and waiting to be resumed, enriched by this sudden excursion—“that when better people come she ought to alter things. It isn’t that she would think it wrong, like the doctor who felt guilty when he bought a carriage to make people believe he had patients, though of course speculation *is* wrong”—she felt herself moving swiftly along, her best memories with her in the cheerful ring of her voice, their quality discernible by him, a kind of reply to all he had told her—“because she believes in keeping up appearances; but she doesn’t know how to make people comfortable.” She was

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creating a wrong impression but with the right voice. Without Miss Scott's suggestions, the discomforts would never have occurred to her.

"Ah she is *stupid*. That is the whole thing." He sat forward stretching and contracting his hands till the muscles cracked; his eyes, flashing their unconcerned contemptuous judgment, were all at once the brilliant misty eyes of a child about to be quenched by sudden sleep.

"No," she said resentfully, "she wants good people, and when they come she has to make all she can out of them. If they stayed she would be able to afford to do things better. Of course they don't come back or recommend her; and the house is always half empty. Her *best* plan would be to fill it with students at a fixed low figure." Miss Scott again . . . his attention was wandering. . . . "The dead *flowers*," he was back again, "in dirty water in a cracked vase; Sissie rushing out, while breakfast is kept waiting, to buy just enough butter for one meal."

"Really?" he giggled.

"She has been most awfully good to me."

"Why not?" he chuckled.

"Do you think you will go and see your Polish friend tomorrow?" She watched anxiously.

"Yes," he conceded blinking sleepily at the end of a long yawn. "I shall perhaps go."

"He might be driven to desperation," she muttered. Her accomplished evening was trembling in the balance. Its hours had frittered away the horrible stranger's chance.

"Ah no," said Mr. Shatov with a little laugh of sincere amusement, "Veslovski will not do foolish things."

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She rose to her feet on the tide of her relief, meeting, as she garnered all the hours of her long day and turned with an out-spreading sheaf of questions towards the expanses of evening leisure so safely at her disposal in the oncrowding tomorrows, the rebuke of the brilliantly burning midnight gas.

"But tell me; how has Mrs. Bailey been so good?"

He sat conversationally forward as if it were the beginning of the evening.

"Oh well." She sought about distastefully amongst the phrases she had collected in descriptions given to her friends, conveying nothing. Mr. Shatov knowing the framework, would see the detail alive and enhance her own sense of it. She glanced over the picture.

Any single selection would be misleading. There was enough material for days of conversation. He was waiting eagerly, *not* impatient after all of personal experiences. Yet nothing could be told. . . .

"You see she lets me be amphibious." Her voice smote her. Mrs. Bailey's kindness was in the room. She was squandering Mrs. Bailey's gas in an effort that was swiftly transforming itself under the influence of her desire to present an adequate picture of her own separate life. His quickening interest drove her on. She turned her eyes from the gas and stared at the carpet, her picture broken up and vanishing before the pathos of its threadbare faded patterns.

"I'm neither a lodger nor a boarder," she recited hurriedly. "I have all the advantages of a boarder; the use of the whole house. I've had this room and the piano to myself for years on Sunday mornings until dinner time, and when there are interesting people I can go down to dinner. I do for weeks on end

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sometimes, and it is so convenient to be able to have meals on Sundays.”

“It is really a most *admirable* arrangement,” he said heartily.

“And last year I had a bicycle accident. I was brought back here with a very showy arm; in a cab. Poor Mrs. Bailey fainted. It was not at all serious. But they gave me their best room, the one behind this, for weeks and waited upon me most beautifully, and mind you they did not expect any compensation, they knew I could not afford it.”

“An injury that should disable for so many weeks shall not have been a light one.”

“That was the doctor. You see it was Saturday. It was more than an hour before they could find any one at all, and then they found a small surgeon in Gower Street. He stitched up my arm with a rusty darning needle taken from Mrs. Bailey’s work-basket just as it was. I told him I had some carbolic in my room; but he said Nevorr mind that. I’m not one of yrr faddists, and bound it all up and I came down to dinner. I had just come back from the first week of my holiday; bicycling in Buckinghamshire, perfect, I never felt so well in my life. I was going to Paris the next day.”

“That was indeed most unfortunate.”

“Well I don’t know. I was going with a woman I did not really know. I meant to go, and she had been thinking of going and knew Paris and where to stay cheaply and suggested we should join forces. A sort of marriage of convenience. I was not really disappointed. I was relieved; though awfully sorry to fail her. But every one was so kind I was simply astonished. I spent the evening on the sofa in the



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dining-room; and they all sat quietly about near me. One man, a Swede, who had only just arrived, sat on the end of the sofa and told Swedish folk stories in a quiet motherly voice, and turned out afterwards to be the noisiest, jolliest, most screamingly funny man we have ever had here. About eleven o'clock I felt faint and we discovered that my arm must have broken out again some time before. Two of the men rushed off to find a doctor and brought an extraordinary little old retired surgeon with white hair and trembling hands. He wheezed and puffed and bound me up afresh and went away refusing a fee. I wanted some milk, and the Swede went out at midnight and found some somewhere. . . . I come back with at least one cow or I come not at all. . . . Of course a week later I had stitch abscesses."

"But this man was a *criminal*."

"Yes wasn't it abominable. Poor man. The two doctors who saw my arm later said that many limbs have been lost for less. He counted on my being in such good health. He told Mrs. Bailey I was in splendid health. But he sent in a big bill."

"I sincerely trust you did not pay this."

"I sent him a description of his operation, told him the result and said that my friends considered that I ought to prosecute him."

"Certainly it was your duty."

"I don't know. I hate cornering people. It would not have made him different and I am no better than he is."

"That is a most extraordinary point of view."

"I was sorry afterwards that I had written like that."

"Why?"

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"Because he threw himself into Dublin Harbour a year later. He must have been in *fearful* difficulties."

"No excuse for criminal neglect."

"The most wonderful thing in the accident itself," pursued Miriam firmly, grasping her midnight freedom and gazing into the pattern her determination that for another few minutes no one should come up to interrupt, "was being so near to death." She glanced up to gauge the effect of her improvisation. The moment she was now intent upon had not been "wonderful." She would not be able to substantiate it; she had never thought it through. It lay ahead now for exploration if he wished, ready to reveal its quality to her for the first time . . . he was sitting hunched against the wall with his hands driven into his pockets, waiting without resistance, with an intentness equal to her own . . . she returned gratefully to her carpet. "It was a skid," she said feeling the oily slither of her front tire. "I fell with my elbow and head between the horses' heels and the wheel of a dray. The back-thrown hoof of the near horse caught the inner side of my arm, and for a long time I saw the grey steel rim of the huge wheel approaching my head. It was strained back with all my force, my elbow pressing the ground, but I thought it could not miss me. There was a moment of absolute calm; *indifference* almost. It came after a feeling of hatred and yet pity for the wheel. It was so awful, wet and glittering grey, and relentless; and stupid, it could not help going on."

"This was indeed a most *remarkable* psychological experience. It happens rarely to be so near death

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with full consciousness. But this absence of fear must be in you a personal idiosyncrasy."

"But I *was* afraid. The thing is that you don't go *on* feeling afraid. Do you see?"

"I hear what you say. But while there is the chance of life the instinct of self-preservation is so strong." . . .

"But that is the surprise; the tumult in your body, something surging up and doing things without thinking."

"Instinctive nervous reaction."

"But there is something else. In the moment you are *sure* you are going to be killed, death changes. You wait, for the moment after."

"That is an illusion, the strength of life in you that cannot, midst good health, accept death. But tell me; your arm was certainly broken?" His gently breathed question took away the sting of his statement.

"No. The wheel went over it just above the bend of the elbow. I did not feel it, and got up feeling only a little dizzy just for a moment and horribly annoyed at the crowd round me. But the two men who were riding with me told me afterwards that my face was grey and my eyes quite *black*."

"That was shock." He rose and stood facing her, in shadow; dark and frock-coated, like a doctor.

"Yes; but I mean it shows that things look worse than they are."

"That is most certainly a deduction that might be drawn. Nevertheless you suffered a most formidable *shock*."

She moved towards the gas looking decisively up at it; and felt herself standing unexpressed, under

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the wide arch of all they had said. He must be told to remember to put out the gas before he went. That said, there was nothing in the world but a reluctant departure.

### CHAPTER III

**T**HREE months ago the Christmas had been a goal for which she could hardly wait. It had offered her, this time, more than its usual safe deep firelit seclusion beyond which no future was visible. It was to pay her in full for having missed the beginning of Eve's venture, taking her down into the midst of it when everything was in order and the beginnings still near enough to be remembered. But having remained during the engrossing months, forgotten, at the same far-distant point, Christmas now suddenly reared itself up a few days off, offering nothing but the shadow of an unavoidable interruption. For the first time she could see life going on beyond it. She would go down into its irrelevance, taking part in everything with absent-minded animation, looking towards her return to town. It would not be Christmas, and the long days of forced absence threatened the features of the year that rose, far away and uncertain, beyond the obstruction.

But the afternoon she came home with four days holiday in her hand, past and future were swept from her path. Tomorrow's journey was a far-off appointment, her London friends remote shadows, banished from the endless continuance of life. She wandered about between Wimpole Street and St. Pancras, holding in imagination wordless converse with a stranger whose whole experience had melted and van-

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ished like her own, into the flow of light down the streets; into the unending joy of the way the angles of buildings cut themselves out against the sky, glorious if she paused to survey them; and almost unendurably wonderful, keeping her hurrying on, pressing, through insufficient silent outcries, towards something, anything, even instant death, if only they could be expressed when they moved with her movement, a maze of shapes, flowing, tilting into each other, in endless patterns, sharp against the light; sharing her joy in the changing same same song of the London traffic; the bliss of post-offices and railway stations, cabs going on and on towards unknown space; omnibuses rumbling securely from point to point, always within the magic circle of London.

Her meal was a crowded dinner-party, all the people in the restaurant its guests, plunging with her, released from experience, unhaunted by hope or regret, into the endless beginning. Into the wrapped contemplation of the gathering, the thought of her visit flashed like a star, dropping towards her, and when she was gathering things together for her packing, her eagerness flamed up and lit her room.

. . . The many Christmases with the Brooms had been part of her long run of escape from the pain-shadowed family life; their house at first a dream-house in the unbroken dream of her own life in London, a shelter where agony was unknown, and lately a forgetfulness, for the long days of the holiday, of the challenge that lived in the walls of her room. For so long the walls had ceased to be the thrilled companions of her freedom, they had seen her endless evening hours of waiting for the next day to entangle her in its odious revolution. They had watched her



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in bleak daylight listening to life going on obliviously all round her, and scornfully sped her desperate excursions into other lives, greeting her empty glad return with the reminder that relief would fade, leaving her alone again with their unanswered challenge. They knew the recurring picture of a form, drifting, grey face upwards, under a featureless grey sky, in shallows, "unreached by the human tide," and had seen its realization in her vain prayer that life should not pass her by; mocking the echoes of her cry, and waiting indifferent, serene with the years they knew before she came, for those that would follow her meaningless impermanence. When she lost the sense of herself in moments of gladness, or in the long intervals of thought that encircled her intermittent reading, they were all round her, waiting, ready to remind her, undeceived by her daily busy passing in and out, relentlessly counting its secret accumulating shame.

During the last three months they had not troubled her. They had become transparent, while the influence of her summer still had them at bay, to the glow shed up from the hours she had spent downstairs with Mrs. Bailey, and before there was time for them to close round her once more, the figure of Michael Shatov, with Europe stretching wide behind him, had forced them into companionship with all the walls in the world. She had been conscious that they waited for his departure; but it was far away out of sight, and when she should be once more alone with them, their attack would find her surrounded; lives lived alone within the vanquished walls of single poor bare rooms in every town in Europe would come visibly to her aid, driving her own walls back into dependence.

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But tonight they were radiant. On no walls in the world could there be a brighter light. Streaming from their gaslit spaces, wherever she turned, was the wide brilliance that had been on everything in the days standing behind the shadow that had driven her into their enclosure. Eva and Harriett, waiting for her together, in a new sunlit life, were the full answer to their challenge. She was going *home*. The walls were traveller's walls. That had been their first fascination; but they had known her only as a traveller; now as she dipped into the unbroken life that would flow around her at the sound of her sisters' blended voices, they knew whence she came and what had been left behind. They saw her years of travel contract to a few easily afforded moments, lit though she had not known it, by light instreaming from the past and flowing now visibly ahead across the farther years.

The distant forgotten forms of the friends of her London life, turning away slighted, filled her, watching them, with a half-repenting solicitude. But they had their mysterious secret life, incomprehensible, but their own; they turned away towards each other and their own affairs, all of them set, at varying angles, unquestioningly towards a prospect she did not wish to share.

She went eagerly to sleep and woke in a few moments in a morning whose sounds coming through the open window, called to her as she leapt out towards them, for responsive demonstrations. Her desire to shout, thrilled to her feet, winged them.

Sitting decorously at the breakfast-table, she felt in equal relationship to all the bright assembly, holding off Mr. Shatov's efforts to engage her in direct con-

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versation, that she might hear, thoughtless and uncomprehending, the general sound of interwoven bright inflections echoing quietly out into the vast morning. She ran out into it, sending off her needless telegram for the joy of skimming over the well-known flags with endless time to spare. The echoing London sky poured down upon them the light of all the world. Within it her share gleamed dancing, given to her by the London years, the London life, shining now, far away, in multitudinous detail, the contemplated enviable life of a stranger.

The third-class carriage was stuffy and cold, crowded with excited travellers whose separate eyes strove in vain to reach the heart of the occasion through a ceaseless exclamatory interchange about what lay just behind them and ahead at the end of the journey. . . . At some time, for some moments during the ensuing days, each one of them would be alone. . . . Consulting the many pairs of eyes, so different yet so strangely alike in their method of contemplation, so hindered and distracted, she felt, with a stifling pang of conviction, that their days would pass and bring no solitude, no single touch of realization and leave them going on, with eyes still quenched and glazed, striving outwards, now here now there, to reach some unapprehended goal.

Immersing herself in her corner she saw nothing more until Eve's face appeared in the crowd waiting upon the seaside platform. Eve beamed welcome and eager wordless communications and turned at once to lead the way through the throng. They hurried, separated by Miriam's hand-luggage, silenced by the din of the traffic rattling over the cobblestones, meeting and parting amongst the thronging pedestrians, down

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the steep slope of the narrow street until Eve turned, with a piloting backward glance, and led the way along the cobbled pavement of a side-street, still narrower and sloping even more steeply downhill. It was deserted, and as they went single-file along the narrow pavement, Miriam caught in the distance, the unwonted sound of the winter sea. She had not thought of the sea as part of her visit, and lost herself in the faint familiar roll and flump of the south-coast tide. It was enough. The holiday came and passed in the imagined sight of the waves tumbling in over the grey beach, and the breaking of the brilliant seaside light upon the varying house-fronts behind the promenade, she returned restored; the prize of far-off London renewed already, keenly, within her hands, to find Eve standing still just ahead, turned towards her; smiling too breathlessly for speech. They were in front of a tiny shop-front, slanting with the steep slant of the little road. The window was full of things set close to the panes on narrow shelves. Miriam stood back, pouring out her appreciation. It *was* perfect; just as she had imagined it; exactly the little shop she had dreamed of keeping when she was a child. She felt a pang of envy.

"*Mine*," said Eve blissfully, "my own." Eve had property; fragile delicate *Eve*, the problem of the family. This was her triumph. Miriam hurried, lest her thoughts should become visible, to glance up and down the street and exclaim the perfection of the situation.

"I know," said Eve with dreamy tenderness, "and it's all my own; the shop and the house; all mine." Miriam's eyes rose fearfully. Above the shop, a

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narrow strip of bright white plaster house shot up, two storeys high; charming, in the way it was complete, a house, and yet the whole of it, with a strip of sky above, and the small neat pavement below, in your eye at once, and beside it right and left, the irregular heights and widths of the small houses, close-built and flush with the edge of the little pavement, up and down the hill. But the thought of the number of rooms inside the little building brought, together with her longing to see them, a sense of the burden of possessions, and her envy disappeared. While she cried you've got a *house*, she wondered, scanning Eve's radiant slender form, whence she drew, with all her apparent helplessness, the strength to face such formidable things.

"I've let the two rooms over the shop. I live at the top." As she exclaimed on the implied wealth, Miriam found her envy wandering back in the thought of the two rooms under the sky, well away from the shop in another world, the rest of the house securely cared for by other people. She moved to the window. "All the right things," she murmured, from her shocked survey of the rows of light green bottles filled with sweets, the boxes of soap, cigarettes, clay pipes, bootlaces, jewellery pinned to cards, crackers and tightly packed pink and white muslin Christmas stockings. Between the shelves she saw the crowded interior of the little shop, a strip of counter, a man with rolled up shirt sleeves, busily twisting a small screw of paper. . . *Gerald*.

"Come inside," said Eve from the door.

"Hullo, Mirry, what d'you think of the emporium?" Gerald, his old easy manner, his smooth polished



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gentle voice, his neat, iron handshake across the mean little counter, gave Eve's enterprise the approval of all the world. "I've done up enough screws of tea to last you the whole blessed evening," he went on from the midst of Miriam's exclamations, "and at least twenty people have been in since you left." A little door flew open in the wall just behind him and Harriett, in an overall, stood at the top of a short flight of stairs, leaping up and down in the doorway. Miriam ran round behind the counter, freely, Eve's shop, their shop, behind her. "Hulloh old silly," beamed Harriett kissing and shaking her, "I just rushed down, can't stay a minute, I'm in the middle of nine dinners, they're all leaving tomorrow and you're to come and sleep with *us*." She fled down the steps, out through the shop and away up the hill, with a rousing attack on Gerald as she passed him leaning with Eve over the till. Miriam was welcomed. The fact of her visit was more to Harriett than her lodgers. She collected her belongings and carried them up the steps past a small dark flight of stairs into a dark little room. A small fire was burning in a tiny kitchen range; a candle guttered on the mantelpiece in the draught from the shop; there was no window and the air of the room was close with the combined odours of the things crowded into the small space. She went back into the bright familiar shop. Gerald was leaving: "See you tomorrow," he called from the door with his smile.

"*Now*; I'll light the lamp and we'll be cosy," said Eve leading the way back into the little room. Miriam waited impatiently for the lamp to make a live centre in the crowded gloom. The little black



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kitchen fire was intolerable as president of Eve's leisure. But the dim lamp, standing low on a little table, made the room gloomier and Eve was back in the shop with a customer. Only the dingy little table, a battered tray bearing the remains of a hasty, shabby tea, the fall below it of a faded, ugly, fringed tablecloth and a patch of threadbare carpet, were clearly visible. . . . She could not remove her attention from them.

Lying sleepless by Eve's side late that night, she watched the pictures that crowded the darkness. Her first moments in the little back room were far away. The small dark bedroom was full of the last picture of Eve, in her nightgown, quietly relentless after explaining that she always kept the window shut because plenty of air came in, taking a heavy string of large blue beads out of her top drawer, to put them in readiness with tomorrow's dress. No; I don't think that a bit; and if I *were* a savage, I should hang myself all over with beads and *love* it. She had spoken with such *conviction*. . . . Up here, with her things arranged round her as she had had them at home and in her bedroom at the Greens', she kept her life as it had always been. She was still her unchanged self, but her freedom was giving her the strength to be sure of her opinions. It was as if she had been saying all the evening with long accumulating preparedness, holding her poise throughout the interruptions of customers and down into the details of the story of her adventures, *Yes* I know your opinions, I have heard them all my life, and now I'm out in the world myself and can meet everybody as an equal, and say what I think, without wondering whether it suits my part as the Greens' governess.

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She had got her strength from the things she had done. It was amazing to think of her summoning courage to break again with the Greens and borrowing from them to start in business, Mr. Green "setting his heart" on the success of the little shop and meaning to come down and see how it was getting on. How awful it would be if it did not get on. . . . But it was getting on. . . . How terrifying it must have been at first not knowing the price of anything in the shop or what to buy for it . . . and then, customers telling her the prices of things and where they were kept, and travellers being *kind*; respectful and friendly and ready to go out of their way to do *anything* . . . that was the other side of Maupassant's "hourrah pour la petite différence" commis voyageurs . . . and well-to-do people in the neighbourhood rushing in for some little thing, taken aback to find a lady behind the counter, and coming again for all sorts of things. . . . Eve would become like one of those middle-aged women shop-keepers in books, in the country, with a kind heart and a sarcastic tongue, seeing through everybody and having the same manner for the vicar and a ploughman, or a rather nicer manner for a ploughman. *No*. Eve was still sentimental. . . .

Those wonderful letters were a bridge; a promise for the future. . . . They were the letters of a boy; *that* was the struggling impression she had not been able to convey. She could start the day well by telling Eve that in the morning. They were the letters of a youth in love for the first time in his life . . . and he had *fifteen* grandchildren. "So wonderful when you think of that old, old man," had not expressed it at all. They were wonderful for *anybody*. Page

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after page, all breathing out the way things shine when the sense of some one who is not there, is there all the time. Eve knew what it had meant to him; "age makes no difference." Then might life suddenly shine like that at any moment, right up to the end. . . . And it made Eve so wonderful; having no idea, all those years, and thinking him just a very kind old man to come, driving, almost from his deathbed, with a little rose-tree in the carriage for her. It was so perfect that he wrote only after she had gone, and he knew he was dying; a youth in love for the first time. If there were a future life he would be watching for Eve to walk gently in crowned with song and making everything sing all round her. . . . But what of the wife, and of Eve's future husband? In Heaven there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage . . . but Kingsley said, then that has nothing to do with me and my wife. Perhaps that was an example of the things he suddenly thought of, walking quickly up and down the garden with a friend, and introduced by saying, "I have always thought." . . . But perhaps the things that occur to you suddenly for the first time in conversation *are* the things you have always thought, without knowing it . . . that was one of the good things in talking to Michael Shatov, finding out thoughts, looking at them when they were expressed and deciding to change them, or think them more decidedly than ever . . . she could explain all that to Eve in the morning as an introduction to him. Or perhaps she could again say, having Eve's attention free of the shop, "I have two pounds to spend on chocolate. Isn't it extraordinary. I must, I am on my honour," and then go on. It was *horrible* that Eve

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had hardly noticed such a startling remark. . . . She turned impatiently; the morning would never come; she would never sleep in this stagnant shut-in motionless air. Tomorrow night she would be in a room by herself at Harry's; but not quite so near to the sea. How *could* Eve shut out life and the sound of the sea? She puffed her annoyance, hardly caring if Eve were disturbed, ready to ask her if she could not smell the smell of the house and the shop and the little back room. But that was not true. She was imagining it because the motionless air was getting on her nerves. If she could not forget it she would have no sleep until she dozed with exhaustion in the morning. And tomorrow was Christmas Day. She lay still, straining her ears to catch the sound of the sea.

The next night the air poured in at an open window, silently lifting long light muslin curtains and waving them about the little narrow room filled as with moonlight by the soft blue light from the street-lamp below. The sound of the sea drowned the present in the sense of sea-side summers; bringing back moments of chance awakenings on sea-side holidays, when the high blaze of yesterday and tomorrow were together in the darkness. Miriam slept at once and woke refreshed and careless in the frosty sunrise. Her room was blazing with golden light. She lay motionless, contemplating it. There was no sound in the house. She could watch the sunlight till something happened. Harry would see that she got up in time for breakfast. There would be sunlight at breakfast in the room below; and Harry and Gerald and the remains of Christmas leisure. . . . "We only keep going because of Elspeth." How could she have gone off to sleep

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last night without recalling that? If Harry and Gerald found marriage a failure, it was a failure. Perhaps it was a passing phase and they would think differently later on. But they had spoken so simply, as if it were a commonplace fact known to everybody . . . they had met so many people by this time. Nearly all their lodgers had been married and unhappy. Perhaps that was because they were nearly all theatrical people? If Harry had stayed in London and not had to work for a living would she have been happier? No; she was gayer down here; even more herself. It *amused* her to have rushes, and turn out three rooms after ten o'clock at night. They both seemed to run the house as a sort of joke, and remained absolutely themselves. Perhaps that was just in talking about it, at Christmas, to her. It certainly must be horrible in the season, as Harry said, the best part of the house packed with selfish strangers for the very best part of the year; so much to do for them all day that there was never even time to run down to the sea. . . . Visitors did not think of that. If they considered their landlady it would spoil their one fortnight of being free. Landladies ought to be old; not minding about working all day for other people and never seeing the sea. Harry was too young to be a landlady . . . the gently moving curtains were flat against the window again for a moment, a veil of thin muslin screening the brilliant gold, making it an even tone all over the room; a little oblong of misty golden light. Even for Harry's sake she could not let any tinge of sadness invade it. . . . That was being exactly like the summer visitors. . . .



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"Good *Gracious!*" The door was open and Harry, entering with a jug of hot water was enveloped in the ends of the out-blown curtains. "Why on Earth d'you have your window like that? It's simply *bitter.*"

"I love it," said Miriam, watching Harriett's active little moving form battle with the flying draperies. "I'm revelling in it."

"Well I won't presume to shut it; but revel *up.* Here you are. Breakfast's nearly ready. Hold the ends while I get out and shut the door."

Harry *too*; and she used to be so fond of open windows. But it was not a snub. She would say to Gerald she's got her window bang open, isn't she an old *Cure?* She got out singing into the fresh golden air leaving the window wide. The London temptation to shirk her swift shampoo and huddle on a garment did not come. The sense of summer was so strong in the bright air that she felt sure, if only she could have always bright screened light in her room, summer warmth and summer happiness would last the whole year round.

Gerald was pouring out coffee. In the kitchen the voices of Harriett and Mrs. Thimm were railing cheerfully together. Harriett came in with a rush, slamming the door. "Is it too warm for you in here Miss Henderson?" she asked as she drove Gerald to his own end of the table.

"It's glorious," said Miriam subsiding into indefinite anticipation. The room was very warm with sunlight and a blazing fire. But there was no pressure anywhere. It was their youth and the way being with them made things go backwards as far as one could see and confidently forward from any room they



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happened to be in. A meal with them always seemed as if it might go on for ever. She glanced affectionately from one to the other, longing to convey to them in some form of words the thing they did not seem to know, the effect they made, together, through having been together from such early beginnings, how it gave and must always give a *confidence* to the very expression of their hair, making them always about to start life together. It came from Harriett, and was reflected by Gerald, a light that played about him, decking him in his most unconscious, busy, man's moments with the credit of having found Harriett. They seemed more suitably arranged, confronted here together in this bright eventful house, meeting adventures together, mutually efficient towards a common end, than with Gerald in business and Harry silken and leisurely in a suburban house. . . .

"We'll be more glorious in a minute," said Gerald sweeping actively about. "I'll just move that old fern."

"Oh, of *course*," mocked Harriett, "*look* at the importance . . ."

Whistling softly Gerald placed a small square box on the table amongst the breakfast things.

"*Oh*, dear me," moaned Harriett from behind the coffee pot, smirking coyly backwards over her shoulder, "hoh, *ar'n't* we grand." It's the new *toy*," she rapped avertedly towards Miriam, in a despairing whisper. Gerald interrupted his whistling to fix on to the box a sort of trumpet, a thing that looked like a wide-open green nasturtium.

"Is it a musical box?" asked Miriam.

"D'you mean to say you've never seen a gramo-

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phone yet?" murmured Gerald, frowning and flicking away dust with his handkerchief. They did not mean as much as they appeared to do when they said life was not worth living . . . they had not discovered life. Gerald did not know the meaning of his interest in things. "People grieve and bemoan themselves, but it is not half so bad with them as they say" . . .

"I haven't. I've heard them squeaking inside public houses of course."

"Now's your chance then. Woa Jemima! That's the ticket. *Now she's off*——"

Miriam waited, breathless; eagerly prepared to accept the coming wonder. A sound like the crackling of burning twigs came out into the silence. She remembered her first attempt to use a telephone, the need for concentrating calmly through the preliminary tumult, on the certainty that intelligible sounds would presently emerge, and listened encouragingly for a voice. The crackling changed to a metallic scraping, labouring steadily round and round, as if it would go on for ever; it ceased and an angry stentorian voice seemed to be struggling, half-smothered, in the neck of the trumpet. Miriam gazed, startled, at the yawning orifice, as the voice suddenly escaped and leaped out across the table with a shout—"Edison-BELL REcOrd!" Lightly struck chords tinkled far away, fairy music, sounding clear and distinct on empty space remote from the steady scraping of the machine. Then a song began. The whole machine seemed to sing it; vibrating with effort, sending forth the notes in a jerky staccato, the scarcely touched words clipped and broken to fit the jingling tune; the sustained upper notes at the end of the verse wavered chromatically,

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as if the machine were using its last efforts to reach the true pitch; it ceased and the far away chords came again, fainter and further away. In the second verse the machine struggled more feebly and slackened its speed, flattened suddenly to a lower key, wavered on, flattening from key to key and collapsed, choking, on a single downward-slurring squeak——

“Oh, but that’s absolutely *perfect!*” sighed Miriam.

“You want to set it slower, silly; it all began too *high.*”

“I know, *la reine*, *he* knows, he’ll set it slower all right.”

This time the voice marched lugubriously forth, with a threatening emphasis on each word; the sustained notes blared wide through their mufflings; yawned out by an angry lion.

“My *word*,” said Harriett, “it’s a funeral this time.”

“But it’s *glorious!* Can you make it go as slowly as you like?”

“We’ll get it right presently, never fear.”

Miriam felt that no correct performance could be better than what she had heard, and listened carelessly to the beginning of the third performance. If it succeeded the blissful light flowing from the room out over her distant world must either be shattered by her tacit repudiation of the cheaply devised ditty, or treacherously preserved at the price of simulated satisfaction. The prelude sounded nearer this time, revealing a piano and an accompanist, and the song came steadily out, a pleasant kindly baritone, beating along on a middle key; a nice unimagined brown-haired young man, who happened to have a voice.

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She ceased to attend; the bright breakfast-table, the cheerfully decorated square room bathed in the brilliant morning light that was flooding the upward slope of the town from the wide sky towering above the open sea, was suddenly outside space and time, going on for ever untouched; the early days flowed up, recovered completely from the passage of time, going forward with today added to them, for ever. The march of the refrain came lilting across the stream of days, joyfully beating out the common recognition of the three listeners. She restrained her desire to take it up, flinging out her will to hold back the others, that they might face out the moment and let it make its full mark. In the next refrain they could all take the relief of shouting their acknowledgement, a hymn to the three-fold life. The last verse was coming successfully through; in an instant the chorus refrain would be there. It was old and familiar, woven securely into experience, beginning its life as memory. She listened eagerly. It was partly too, she thought, absence of singer and audience that redeemed both the music and the words. It was a song overheard; sounding out innocently across the morning. She saw the sun shining on the distant hill-tops, the comrades in line, and the lingering lover tearing himself away for the roll-call. The refrain found her far away, watching the scene until the last note should banish it.

The door opened and Elspeth stood in the doorway.

"*Well*, my pet?" said Harriett and Gerald gently, together.

She trotted round the open door, carefully closing it with her body, her steady eyes taking in the dis-

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position of affairs. In a moment she stood near the table, the silky rounded golden crown of her head rising just above it. Miriam thrilled at her nearness, delighting in the firm clutch of the tiny hand on the edge of the table, the gentle shapely bulge of the ends of her hair inturned towards her neck, the little busy bustling expression of her bunchy motionless little muslin dress. Suddenly she looked up in her way, Gerald's disarming gentleness, all Eve's reined-in gaiety. . . . "I your baby?" she asked with a small lunge of affection. Miriam blushed. The tiny thing had *remembered* from yesterday . . . "Yes," she murmured encircling her and pressing her lips to the warm silken top of her head. Gerald burst into loud wailing. Elspeth moved backwards towards Harriett and stood propped against her, contemplating him with sunny interest. Harriett's firm ringed hand covered the side of her head.

"Poor Poppa," she suggested.

"Be *cri*-ut Gerald!" Elspeth cried serenely, frowning with effort. She stood on tip-toe surveying the contents of the table and waved a peremptory hand towards the gramophone. Gerald tried to make a bargain. Lifted on to Harriett's knee she bunched her hands and sat compact. The direct rays made her head a little sunlit sphere, smoothly outlined with silky pale gold hair bulging softly over each ear, the broken curve continued by the gentle bulge of her cheeks as she pursed her face to meet the sunlight. She peered unsmiling, but every curve smiled; a little sunny face, sunlit. Fearing that she would move, Miriam tried to centre attention by seeming engrossed in Gerald's operations, glancing sideways meanwhile

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in an entrancement of effort to define in her small perfection. The list of single items summoned images of children who missed her charm by some accentuation of character, pointing backwards to the emphatic qualities of a relative and forward so clearly that already they seemed adult. Elspeth predicted nothing. The closest observation revealed no point of arrest. Her undivided impression once caught, could be recovered in each separate feature.

Eve came in as the music ceased. In the lull that followed the general greetings Miriam imagined a repetition of the song, to carry Eve back into what had gone before and forward with them in the unchanged morning. But Mrs. Thimm broke in with a tray and scattered them all towards the fire. Let's hear Molly Darling once more she thought in a casual tone. After yesterday Eve would take that as a lack of interest in her presence. Supposing she did? She was so changed that she could be treated without consideration, as an equal . . . but she overdid it, preening herself, caring more for the idea of independence than for the fact. That would not keep her going. She would not be strong enough to sustain her independence. . . .

The sense of triumph threw up an effulgence even while Miriam accused herself of cruelty in contemplating the droopy exhaustion which had outlived Eve's day of rest. But she was not alone in this; nice good people were secretly impatient with relatives who were always threatening to break down and become problems. And Eve had almost ceased to be a relative. Descending to the rank of competitor she was no longer a superior . . . she was



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an inferior masquerading as an equal . . . that was what men meant in the newspapers. Then it couldn't be true. There was some other explanation. It was because she was using her independence as a revenge for the past. . . . What men resented was the sudden reflection of their detachment by women who had for themselves discovered its secret, and knew what uncertainties went on behind it. She was resenting Eve's independence as a man would do. Eve was saying she now understood the things that in the past she had only admired, and that they were not so admirable, and quite easy to do. But she disgraced the discovery by flaunting it. It was so evident that it was her shop, not she that had come into the room and spoiled the morning. Even now she was dwelling on next week. Inside her mind was nothing but her customers, travellers, the possible profits, her many plans for improvement. Nothing else could impress her. Anything she contributed would rest more than ever, now that Christmas Day was over, upon a back-ground of absent-minded complacency. Like herself, with the Brooms? Was it she who was being judged and not Eve? No, or only by herself. Harriett shared her new impressions of Eve, saw how eagerly in her clutch on her new interests she had renounced her old background of inexhaustible sympathy. Gerald did not. But men have no sense of atmosphere. They only see the appearances of things, understanding nothing of their relationships. Bewilderment, pessimistic philosophies, *regretful* poetry. . . .

The song might banish Eve's self-assertion and bring back something of her old reality. Music, any

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music, would always make Eve real. Perhaps Elspeth would ask for it. But in the long inactive seconds, things had rushed ahead shattering the sunlit hour. Nothing could make it settle again. Eve had missed it for ever. But she had discovered its presence. Its broken vestiges played about her retreat as she turned away to Elspeth; Gerald who alone was unconscious of her discovery, having himself been spell-bound without recognizing his whereabouts, was inaccessibly filling his pipe. She was far-off now, trying to break her way in by an attack on Elspeth. Miriam watched anxiously, reading the quality of their daily intercourse. Elspeth was responding with little imitative movements, arch smiles and gestures. Miriam writhed. Eve would teach her to see life as people, a few prominent over-emphasized people in a fixed world. . . . But Elspeth soon broke away to trot up and down the hearth-rug, and when Gerald caught and held her, asking as he puffed at his pipe above her head a rallying question about the shop, she stood propped looking from face to face, testing voices.

The morning had changed to daytime. . . . Gerald and Eve made busy needless statements, going over in the form of question and answer the history of the shop, and things that had been obviously already discussed to exhaustion. Across Harriett's face thoughts about Eve and her venture passed in swift comment on the conversation. Now and again she betrayed her impatience, leaping out into abrupt ironic emendations and presently rose with a gasp, thumping Miriam gently, "Come on, you've got to try on that blouse." The colloquy snapped. Eve turned a

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flushed face and sat back looking uneasily into vacancy as if for something she had forgotten to say.

"Try it on down here," said Gerald.

"Don't be idiotic."

"It's all right. *We* shan't mind. We won't look till she's got it on."

"If you look then, you will be dazzled by my radiance." Miriam stood listening in astonishment to the echoes of the phrase, fashioned from nothing upon her lips by something within her, unknown, wildly to be welcomed if its power of using words that left her not merely untouched and unspent, but taut and invigorated, should prove to be reliable. She watched the words go forward outside her with a life of their own, palpable, a golden thread between herself and the world, the first strand of a bright pattern she and Gerald would weave from their separate engrossments whenever their lives should cross. Through Gerald's bantering acknowledgment she gazed out before her into the future, an endless perspective of blissful unbroken silence, shielded by the gift of speech. . . . The figure of Eve, sitting averted towards the fire, flung her back. To Eve her words were not silence; but a blow deliberately struck. With a thrill of sadness she recognized the creative power of anger. If she had not been angry with Eve she would have wondered whether Gerald were secretly amused by her continued interest in blouses, and have fallen stupidly dumb before the need of explaining, as her mind now rapidly proceeded to do, cancelling her sally as a base foreign achievement, that her interest was only a passing part of holiday relaxation, to be obliterated tomorrow by the renewal

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of a life that held everything he thought she was missing, in a way and with a quality new and rich beyond anything he could dream, and contemplating these things, would have silently left him with his judgment confirmed. She had moved before Gerald, safely ensphered in the life of words, and in the same movement was departing now, on the wings of Harriett's rush, a fiend denying her kindred.

Running upstairs she reflected that if the finished blouse suited her it was upon Eve that it would most powerfully cast its spell. The shoulders had been good. Defects in the other parts could not spoil them, and the squareness of her shoulders was an odd thing for which she was not responsible. Eve only admired them because hers sloped. She would come down again as the gay buffoon Eve used to know, letting the effect of the blouse be incidental, making today today, shaking them all out of the contemplation of circumstances. She would give some of her old speeches and musical sketches, if she could manage to begin when Gerald was not there, and Eve would laugh till she cried. No one would guess that she was buoyed up by her own invisible circumstances, forgotten as she browsed amongst new impressions, and now returning upon her moment by moment with accumulated force. But upstairs, confronted by Harriett in the summerlit seaside sunshine, she found the past half-hour between them, pressing for comment, and they danced silently confronting each other, dancing and dancing till they had said their say.

The visit ended in the stillness that fell upon the empty carriage as the train left the last red-roofed

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houses behind and slid out into the open country. She swung for an instant over the spread of the town, serene unchanging sunlit grey, and brilliant white, green shuttered and balconied, towards the sea, warm yellow brick, red-roofed, towards the inland green, her visit still ahead of her. But the interiors of Eve's dark little house and Harriett's bright one slipped in between her and the pictured town, and the four days' succession of incidents overtook her in disorder, playing themselves out, backwards and forwards, singly, in clear succession, two or three together, related to each other by some continuity of mood within herself, pell mell, swiftly interchanging, each scene in turn claiming the foremost place; moments stood out dark and overshadowing; the light that flooded the whole strove in vain to reach these painful peaks. The far-away spring offered a healing repetition of her visit; but the moments remained immovable. Eve would still be obstinately saying the Baws and really thinking she knew which side she was on . . . Wawkup and Poole Carey . . . those were quotations as certainly as were Eve's newspaper ideas; Wimpole Street quotations. The thing was that Eve had learned to want to be always in the right and was not swift enough in gathering things . . . not *worldly* enough. The train was rocking and swaying in its rush towards its first stop. After that the journey would seem only a few minutes, time passing more and more rapidly, filled with the pressure of London coming nearer and nearer. But the junction was still a good way off.

"No. It's nothing of that kind. All Russian



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students are like that. They have everything in common. On the inside of the paper he had written it will be unfriendly if it should occur to you to feel any sentiment of resentment. What could I do? Oh yes they would. A Russian would think nothing of spending two pounds on chocolate if he wanted to. They live on bread too, nothing but bread and tea, some of them, for the sake of being able to work. What I can't make him see is that although I am earning my living and he is not, he is preparing to earn a much more solid living than I ever shall. He says he is ashamed to be doing nothing while I am already independent. The next moment he is indignant that I have not enough for clothes and food; I have to be absolutely rude to make him let me pay for myself at restaurants. When I say it is worth it and I have enough, much more than thousands of women workers, he is silent with indignation. Then when I say that what is really wrong is that I have been cheated of my student period and ought to be living on somebody as a student, he says, 'Pairhaps, but you are in *life*, that is the more important.'

"All right, I will ask him. Poor little man. He has spent his Christmas at Tansley Street. He would adore Elspeth; although she is not a 'beef-steak.' He says there are no children in Europe finer than English children, and will stop suddenly in the middle of a serious conversation to say, 'Look, look; but *that* is a *real* English beef-steak.'"

Harry had partly understood. But she still clung to her private thoughts. Meeting him today would



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not be quite the same as before she had mentioned him to any one. Summoning his familiar form she felt that her talk had been treachery. Yet not to have mentioned him at all felt like treachery too.

“There’s quite an interesting Russian at Tansley Street now.” That meant simply nothing at all. . . . Christmas *had* been an interruption. . . . Perhaps something would have happened in his first days of London without her. Perhaps he would not appear this evening.

Back at her work at Wimpole Street she forgot everything in a sudden glad realization of the turn of the year. The sky was bright above the grey wall opposite her window. Soon there would be bright light in it at five o’clock, daylight remaining to walk home in, then at six, and she would see once more for another year the light of the sun on the green of the park. The alley of crocuses would come again, then daffodils in the grass and the green of the on-coming blue-bells. Her table was littered with newly paid accounts, enough to occupy her pen for the short afternoon with pleasant writing, the reward of the late evenings spent before Christmas in hurrying out overdue statements, and the easy prelude to next week’s crowded work on the yearly balance sheets. She sat stamping and signing, and writing picturesque addresses, her eyes dwelling all the while in contemplation of the gift of the outspread year. The patients were few and no calls came from the surgeries. Tea came up while she still felt newly-arrived from the outside world, and the outspread scenes in her mind were gleaming still

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with fresh high colour in bright light, but the last receipt was signed, and a pile of envelopes lay ready for the post.

She welcomed the sound of Mrs. Orly's voice, tired and animated at the front door, and rose gladly as she came into the room with little bright broken incoherent phrases, and the bright deep unwearied dauntless look of welcome in her little tired face. She was swept into the den and kept there for a prolonged tea-time, being questioned in detail about her Christmas in Eve's shop, seeing Mrs. Orly's Christmas presents and presently moving in and out of groups of people she knew only by name. An extraordinary number of disasters had happened amongst them. She listened without surprise. Always all the year round these people seemed to live under the shadow of impending troubles. But Mrs. Orly's dolorous list made Christmas seem to be, for them, a time devoted to the happening of things that crashed down in their midst, dealing out life-long results. Mrs. Orly talked rapidly, satisfied with gestures of sympathy, but Miriam was conscious that her sympathy was not falling where it was demanded. She watched the family centres unmoved, her mind hovering over their imagined houses, looking regretfully at the shattered whole, the views from their windows that belonged to the past and were suddenly strange as when they had first seen them; passing on to their servants and friends and outwards into their social life, following results as far as she could, the principal sufferers impressing her all the time in the likeness of people who suddenly make avoidable disturbances in the midst of a con-

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versation. Driven back, from the vast questioning silence at the end of her outward journey, to the centres of Mrs. Orly's pictures, she tried to dwell sympathetically with the stricken people and fled aghast before their inexorable circumstances. They were all so hemmed in, so closely grouped that they had no free edges, and were completely, publicly at the mercy of the things that happened. Every one in social life was aware of this. Experienced people said "there is always *something*," "a skeleton in every cupboard." . . . But why did people get into cupboards? Something or someone was to blame. In some way that pressed through the picture now in one form and now in another, just eluding expression in any single statement she could frame, these bright-looking lives, free of all that civilization had to offer, were all to blame; all facing the same way, unaware of anything but the life they lived among themselves, they *made* the shadow that hung over them all; they invited its sudden descents. . . . She felt that her thoughts were cruel; like an unprovoked blow, worthy of instant revenge by some invisible observant third party; but even while in the presence of Mrs. Orly's sympathy she accused herself of heartlessness and strove to retreat into a kindlier outlook, she was aware, moving within her conviction, of some dim shape of truth that no sympathy could veil.

At six o'clock the front door closed behind her, shutting her out into the multitudinous pattering of heavy rain. With the sight of the familiar street shortened by darkness to a span lit faintly by dull rain-shrouded lamps, her years of daily setting forth into London came about her more clearly than ever

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before as a single unbroken achievement. Jubilantly she reasserted, facing the invitation flowing towards her from single neighbourhoods standing complete and independent, in inexhaustibly various loveliness through the procession of night and day, linked by streets and by-ways, living in her as mood and reverie, that to have the freedom of London was a life in itself. Incidents from Mrs. Orly's conversation pressing forward through her outcry, heightened her sense of freedom. If the sufferers were her own kindred, if disaster threatened herself, walking in London, she would pass into that strange familiar state, where all clamourings seemed unreal and on in the end into complete forgetfulness.

Two scenes flashed forth from the panorama beyond the darkness and while she glanced at the vagrants stretched asleep on the grass in the Hyde Park summer, carefully to be skirted and yet most dreadfully claiming her companionship, she saw, narrow and gaslit, the little unlocated street that had haunted her first London years, herself flitting into it, always unknowingly, from a maze of surrounding streets, feeling uneasy, recognizing it, hurrying to pass its awful centre where she must read the name of a shop, and, dropped helplessly into the deepest pit of her memory, struggle on through thronging images threatening, each time more powerfully, to draw her willingly back and back through the intervening spaces of her life to some deserved destruction of mind and body, until presently she emerged faint and quivering, in a wide careless thoroughfare. She had forgotten it; perhaps somehow learned to avoid it. Her imagined figure passed

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from the haunted scene, and from the vast spread of London the tide flowed through it, leaving it a daylight part of the whole, its spell broken and gone. She struggled with her stiffly opening umbrella, listening joyfully to the sound of the London rain. She asked nothing of life but to stay where she was, to go on. . . . London was her pillar of cloud and fire, undeserved, but unsolicited, life's free gift. In still exultation she heard her footsteps go down into the street and along the streaming pavement. The light from a lamp just ahead fell upon a figure, plunging in a swift diagonal across the muddy roadway towards her. He had come to meet her . . . invading her street. She fled exasperated, as she slackened her pace, before this postponement of her meeting with London, and silently drove him off, as he swept round to walk at her side, asking him how he dared unpermitted to bring himself, and the evening, and the evening mood, across her inviolable hour. His overcoat was grey with rain and as she glanced he was scanning her silence with that slight quivering of his features. Poor brave little lonely man. He had spent his Christmas at Tansley Street.

"Well? How was it?" he said. He was a gaoler, shutting her in.

"Oh it was all right."

"Your sisters are well? Ah I *must* tell you," his voice boomed confidently ahead into the darkness; "while I waited I have seen two of your doctors."

"They are not doctors."

"I had an immensely good impression. I find them both most fine English types."

"Hm; they're absolutely English." She saw them

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coming out, singly, preoccupied, into their street. English. He standing under his lamp, a ramshackle foreigner whom they might have regarded with suspicion, taking them in with a flash of his prepared experienced brown eye.

“Abso-lutully. This unmistakable expression of humanity and fine sympathetic intelligence. Ah, it is fine.”

“I *know*. But they have very simple minds, they quote their opinions.”

“I do not say that you will find in the best English types a striking originality of *mentality*,” he exclaimed reproachfully. Her attention pounced unwillingly upon the promised explanation of her own impressions, tired in advance at the prospect of travelling through his carefully pronounced sentences while the world she had come out to meet lay disregarded all about her. “But you will find what is perhaps more important, the characteristic features of your English civilization.”

“I know. I can *see* that; because I am neither English nor civilized.”

“That is a nonsense. You are most English. No, but it is really most wonderful,” his voice dropped again to reverence and she listened eagerly, “how in your best aristocracy and in the best types of professional men, your lawyers and clerics and men of science, is to be read so strikingly this history of your nation. There is a something common to them all that shines out, *durchleuchtend*, showing, sometimes, understand me, with almost a naïvety, the centuries of your freedom. Ah it is not for nothing that the word gentleman comes from England.”



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"I know, I know what you mean," said Miriam in contemplation, they *were* naïve; showing their thoughts, in sets, readable, with shapes and edges, but it was the Tories and clerics who had the roomiest, most sympathetic expressions, liberals and nonconformists had no thoughts at all, only ideas. Lawyers had no ideas even . . .

"You would like my father; he hasn't a scrap of originality, only that funny old-fashioned English quality from somewhere or other Heaven knows," . . . and they could play chess together! . . . "But lawyers are not gentlemen. They are perfectly awful."

"That is a prejudice. Your English law is the very basis of your English freedom."

"They are awful. The others look Christians. They *don't*." Fancy defending Christianity . . .

"The thing you are seeing," she said, is Christianity. I don't mean that there is anything in it; but Christian ideas have made English civilization; that's what it is. But how can you say all these things when you believe we are grabbing diamond mines?" Haw, *what?* Champagne and Grand pianos. Nice, jolly prejudiced *simpletons*; not even able to imagine that England ought not to have everything there was to be had, everywhere. Quite right, better for everybody . . . but . . . wir reiten, Pieter, reiten . . . oh Lord . . . *who* was right?

"Stop a bit, stop a bit. Christianity will not explain. There are other Christian countries where there is no sign of this thing that is in England. No. The explanation is very simple. It is that you have had in England through a variety of causes,

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not the least of which is your Protestant Reformation, a relatively very rapid and unrestricted *secular* development."

"What about Germany and Holland?"

"Both quite different stories. There was in England a specially favourable gathering of circumstances for rapid secularistic development."

"Then if we have been made by our circumstances it is no credit to us."

"I have not said anything about *credit*."

"But there are people now who think we are dying of the Reformation; not the break with Rome; but with Catholic history and tradition. No, wait a minute, it's interesting. They have discovered, *proved*, that there was Christianity in Britain, and British Christian Churches, long before the Romans came. That means that we are as old, and as direct as Rome. The Pope is nothing but a Roman Bishop. I feel it is an immense relief, to know we go right back, *ourselves*; when I think of it."

"All these clericalisms are immaterial to *life*."

"Then there were two Popes at one time, and there is the Greek church. I wonder Newman didn't think of that. Now *he* is one of your fine English types, although he looks scared, as if he had seen a ghost. If he had known about the early British church perhaps he would not have gone over to Rome."

"I cannot follow all this. But what is indisputable is, that in every case of religious authority, secular development has been held back. Buckle has completely demonstrated this in a most masterly exhaustive consideration of the civilizations of Europe. Ah it is *marvellous*, this book, one of your finest decorations;

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and without any smallest touch of fanaticism; he is *indeed* perhaps one of your greatest minds of the best English type, full of sensibility and fine gentleness."

Miriam was back, as she listened, in the Chiswick villa, in bed in the yellow lamp-light with a cold, the pages of the *Apologia* reading themselves without effort into her molten mind, as untroubled beauty and happiness, making what Newman sought seem to be at home in herself, revealing deep inside life a whole new strange place of existence that was yet familiar, so that the gradual awful gathering of his trouble was a personal experience, and the moment of conviction that schism was a deliberate death, a personal conviction. She wondered why she always forgot that the problem had been solved. Glancing beyond the curve of her umbrella she caught, with his last words, the sudden confident grateful shining of Mr. Shatov's lifted face and listened eagerly.

"It is this one thing," she lifted the umbrella his way in sudden contrition, shifting it so that it sheltered neither of them; "Thank you, I am quite well. It is hardly now raining," he muttered at his utmost distance of foreign intonation and bearing. She peered out into the air, shutting her umbrella. They had come out of their way, away from the streets into a quietness. It must be the Inner Circle. They would have to walk right round it.

"It is this one thing," again it was as if her own voice were speaking, "this thesis of the *conditions* of the development of peoples," Anglican priests *married*; but not the highest high-Anglican. But they were always going over to Rome . . . "that had made your Buckle so precious to the Russian

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intelligentsia. In England he is scarcely now read, though I have seen by the way his works in this splendid little edition of World Classics, the same as your Emerson, why did you take only Emerson? There is a whole row, the most fascinating things."

"My Emerson was given to me. I didn't know it came from anywhere in particular."

"This Richards must be a most enlightened publisher. I should wish to possess all those volumes. The Buckle I will certainly take at once and you shall see. He is of course out of date in the matter of exact science and this is no doubt part reason why in England he is no more read. It is a great pity. His mind is perhaps greater than even your Darwin, certainly with a far wider philosophical range, and of *far* greater originality. What is wonderful is his actual anticipation, in idea, without researches, of a large part of what Darwin discovered more accidentally, as a result of his immense naturalistic researches."

"Some one will discover some day that Darwin's conclusions were wrong, that he left out some little near obvious thing with big results, and his theory, which has worried thousands of people nearly to death, will turn out to be one of those everlasting mannish explanations of everything which explain nothing. I know what you are going to say; a subsequent reversal of a doctrine does not invalidate scientific method. I know. But these everlasting theories, and men are so 'eminent' and important about them, are appalling; in medicine, it is simply *appalling*, and people are just as ill as ever; and when they know Darwin was mistaken, there will be an end of Herbert Spencer.

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There's my father, really an intelligent man, he has done scientific research himself and knew Faraday, and he thinks First Principles the greatest book that was ever written. I have argued and argued but he says he is too old to change his cosmos. It makes me simply ill to think of him living in a cosmos made by Herbert Spencer."

"*Wait.* Excuse me but that is all too easy. In matter of science the conclusions of Darwin will *never* be displaced. It is as the alphabet of biology, as Galilei is of Astronomy. More. These researches even need not be made again. They are for all time verified. Herbert Spencer I agree has carried too far in too wholesale a manner conclusions based on Darwin's discoveries; conclusions may lead to many inapplicable theories, that is immaterial; but Darwin himself made no such theories. There is no question of *opinion* as to his discoveries; he supplies simply unanswerable *facts*.

"I think it's Huxley who makes me angry with Darwinism. He didn't find it out, and he went swaggering about using it as a weapon; *frightfully* conceited about it. That Thomas Henry Huxley should come off best in an argument was quite as important to him as spreading the Darwinian theory. I *never* read anything like his accounts of his victories in his letters."

"That is most certainly not the spirit of Darwin, who was a most gentle creature. . . . But you really surprise me in your attitude towards the profession of law."

"I don't know anything whatever about laws; but I have met lawyers, barristers and solicitors, and I

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think they are the most ignorant, pig-headed people in the world. They have no minds at all. They don't affect *me*. But if I were ever before a judge I should shoot him. They use cases to show off their silly wit, sitting thinking of puns; and people are put to death."

"You are in this matter both prejudiced and unjust, believe me. You cannot in any case make individuals responsible in this matter of capital punishment. That is for all humanity. I see you are like myself, a dreamer. But it is bad to let what might be, blind you to *actuality*. To the great actuality, in this case, that in matters of justice between man and man *England* has certainly led the civilized world. In France, it is true, there is a certain special generosity towards certain types of provoked crime; but France has not the large responsibilities of England. The idea of abstract justice, is stronger in England than anywhere. But what you do not see is that in confessing ignorance of your law you pay it the highest possible tribute. You do not know what individual liberty is because you know nothing of any other condition. Ah you cannot conceive what strangeness and wonder there is for a Russian in this spectacle of a people so free that they hold their freedom as a matter of course."

*Decked.* Distinguished. Marked among the nations, for unconscious qualities. What *is* England? What do the qualities mean?

"I'm not interested in laws. If I knew what they were I should like to break them. Trespassers will be prosecuted always makes me furious."

"That is merely a technical by-law. That is just



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one of your funny English high-churchishnesses this trespassers . . . ah I must tell you I was just now in the Hyde Park. There was a meeting, ah it was indeed wonderful to me all these people freely gathered together! There was some man addressing them, I could not hear, but suddenly a man near me on the outskirts of the crowd shouted in full voice, "Chamberlain is a damned *liar!*" Yes, but wait for your English laughter. That is not the whole. There was also quite near me, a very big John Bull *bobby*. He turned to pass on, with a *smile*. Ah that indeed for a Russian was a most *wonderful* spectacle."

"We ought to be hurrying," said Miriam, burning with helpless pity and indignation, "you will be late for dinner."

"That is true. Shall you not also take dinner? Or if you prefer we can dine elsewhere. The air is most pure and lovely. We are in some Park?"

"Regent's Park," she said hastily, breathing in its whole circumference, her eyes passing, through the misty gloom, amongst daylight pictures of every part. He had not known even where he was; completely foreign, a mind from an unknown world, obviously at her side. A headlong urgency possessed her; the coming back to London had not yet been; perhaps this time she would miss it; already she was tired with thought and speech. Incoherently improvising an appointment she hurried along, her mind set excitedly towards Tansley Street. There was always some new thing waiting there when she returned from an absence; she could hear about it and get over her greetings and out for an hour by herself. She increased her pace until Mr. Shatov panted for

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breath as he plunged along by her side. The random remarks she made to cover her thoughts hurtled about in the darkness, stabbing her with vindictive unhelpful comments on her English stiffness, embarrassing her gait and increasing her angry fatigue. He responded in breathless shouts as if they were already in the crowded streets. They reached pavement, big houses loomed up out of the mist, the gates were just ahead. "We had better rather at once take an omnibus," he shouted as they emerged into the Euston Road and a blue umbrella bus passed heavily by. She hurried forward to catch it at the corner. "That goes only to *Gower Street*," thundered his following voice. She was in amongst the crowd at the corner and as again the bus lumbered off, inside it in the one remaining seat.

In the dimly lit little interior, moving along through the backward flowing mist-screened street lights, she dropped away from the circling worlds of sound, and sat thoughtless gazing inward along the bright kaleidoscopic vistas that came unflinching and unchanged whenever she was moving, alone and still, against the moving tide of London. When the bus pulled up for a moment in a block, she searched the gloom-girt forms within her view. The blue light of the omnibus lamp lit up faces entangled in visible thoughts, unwillingly suffering the temporary suspension of activity, but in the far corner there was one, alive and aware, gazing untrammelled at visions like her own, making them true, the common possession of all who would be still. Why were these people only to be met in omnibuses and now and again walking sightless along crowded streets? Perhaps in life they were always surrounded

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with people with whom they did not dare to be still. In speech that man would be a little defensive and cynical. He had a study, where he went to get away from everything, to work; sometimes he only pretended to work. He did not guess that any one outside books, certainly not any *women* anywhere . . . the bus rumbled on again; by the time it reached Gower Street she had passed through thoughtless ages. The brown house and her room in it called to her recreated. Once through the greetings awaiting her, she would be free upstairs amongst its populous lights and shadows; perhaps get in unseen and keep her visions untouched through the evening. She would have an evening's washing and ironing. Mr. Shatov would not expect her tonight.

Mrs. Bailey, hurrying through the hall to dinner, came forward dropping bright quiet cries of welcome from the edge of her fullest mood of excited serenity, gently chiding Miriam's inbreaking expectant unpreparedness with her mysterious gradual way of imparting bit by bit, so that it was impossible to remember how and when she had begun, the new thing; lingering silently at the end of her story to disarm objections before she turned and flitted, with a reassuring pleading backward smile, into her newly crowded dining-room. A moment later Miriam was in the drawing-room, swiftly consulting the profile of a tweed-clad form bent busily writing at the little table under the gas. The man leapt up and faced her with a swift ironic bow, strode to the hearth-rug and began to speak. She remained rooted in the middle of the room amplifying her impression as his sentence went on, addressed not to her, though he occasionally flung

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a cold piercing glance her way, but to the whole room, in a high, narrowly-rounded, fluting tone as if he were speaking into a cornet. His head had gone up above the level of the brighter light but it looked even more greyish yellow than before, the sparse hair, the eyes, the abruptly blanching moustache moving most remarkably with his fluting voice, the pale tweed suit, all one even yellowish grey, and his whole reared up, half soldierly form, at bay, as if the room were full of jeering voices. His long declamation contained all that Mrs. Bailey had said and told her also that the lecture was about Spanish literature. London was extraordinary. A Frenchman, suddenly giving a lecture in English on Spanish literature; at the end of next week. He wound up his tremendous sentence by telling her that she was a secretary, and must excuse his urgency, that he required the services of an English secretary and would now, with her permission read the first part of the lecture that she might tell him whenever his intonation was at fault. That would be *immensely* interesting and easy she thought, and sat down on the music stool while he gathered up his sheaf of papers and explained that foreign intonation was the always neglected corner-stone of the mastery of a foreign tongue.

In a moment he was back again on the hearth-rug, beginning his lecture in a tone that was such an exaggeration of his conversational voice, so high-pitched and whistlingly rounded, so extremely careful in enunciation that Miriam could hear nothing but a loud thin hooting, full of the echoes of the careful beginnings and endings of English words.

The first sentence was much longer than his address

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to her and when it ended she did not know how or where to begin. But he had taken a step forward on the hearth-rug and begun another sentence, on a higher pitch, with a touch of anger in his voice. She checked a spasm of laughter and sat tense, trying to ignore the caricature of his style that gambolled in her mind. The sentence, even longer than the first, ended interrogatively with a fling of the head. It was *tragic*. She was quick, quicker than any one she knew, in catching words or meanings through strange disguises. An audience would be either furious or hysterical.

"You don't want to *threaten* your audience," she said very quietly in a low tone, hoping by contrast to throw up his clamour.

"I dew not threaten," he said with suave patience, "doubtless hew are misled. It is a great occasion; and a great subject; of hwich I am master; in these circumstances a certain bravura is imperative. Hew du not propose that I should *plead* for Cervantes for example? I will continue."

The sentences grew in length, each one climbing, through a host of dependent clauses, small sharp hammer blows of angry assertion, and increasing in tone to a climax of defiance flung down from a height that left no further possibility but a descent to a level quiet deduction . . . and *now* dear brethren . . . but the succeeding sentence came fresh to the attack, crouching, gathering up the fury of its forerunner, leaping forward, dipping through still longer dependent loops, accumulating, swelling and expanding to even greater emphasis and volume. She gave up all

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hope of gathering even the gist of the meaning; he seemed to be saying one thing over and over again. You protest too much . . . don't *protest*; don't *gesticulate* . . . the English don't *gesticulate* . . . but he used no gesticulations; he was aware; that was a deliberate attempt to be English. But his whole person was a gesture, expanding, vibrating.

"You mean by intonation only the intonation of single words, not of the whole?"

"Precisely. Correctness of accent and emphasis is my aim. But you imply a criticism," he fluted, unshaken by his storm.

"Yes. First you must not pronounce each word quite so carefully. It makes them *echo* into each other. Then of course if you want to be quite English you must be less emphatic."

"I must assume an air of indifference?"

"An English audience will be more likely to understand if you are slower and more quiet. You ought to have gaps now and then."

"Intervals for yawning. Yew shall indicate suitable moments. I see that I am fortunate to have met-hew. I will take lessons, for this lecture, in the true frigid English dignity."

The door opened, admitting Mr. Shatov.

"Mr.—a—Shatov; will be so good; as to grant five minutes; for the conclusion of this interview." He walked forward bowing with each phrase, hiding the intruder and bowing him out of the room. The little dark figure reappeared punctually, and he rose with a snap of the fingers. "The English," he declaimed at large, "have an excellent phrase; which



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says, time is money. This phrase, good though it is, might be improved. Time is let out on usury. So, for the present, I shall leave yew." He turned on the sweeping bow that accompanied his last word and stepped quickly with a curious stiff marching elegance down the room towards Mr. Shatov as though he did not see him, avoiding him at the last moment by a sharp curve. Outside the closed door he rattled the handle as if to make sure it was quite shut.

Miriam sought intently for a definition of what had been in the room . . . a strange echoing shadow of some real thing . . . there was something real . . . just behind the empty sound of him . . . somewhere in the rolled up manuscript so remarkably in her hands, making a difference in the evening brought in by Mr. Shatov. Hunger and fatigue were assailing her; but the long rich day mounting up to an increasing sense of incessant life crowding upon her unsought, at her disposal, could not be snapped by retirement for a solitary meal. He walked quickly to the hearth-rug, bent forward and spat into the empty grate.

"*What* is this fellow?"

She broke through her frozen astonishment, "I have just undertaken a perfectly frightful thing," she said, quivering with disgust.

"I find him insufferable."

"The French sing their language. It is like a recitative, the tone goes up and down and along and up and down again with its own expression; the words have to fit the tune. They have no single abrupt words and phrases, the whole thing is a *shape*

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of *tones*. It's extraordinary. All somehow arranged; in a pattern; different patterns for the expression of the different emotions. In their English it makes the expression swallow up the words, a wind driving through them continuously . . . liaison."

"It is a musical tongue certainly."

"That's it; music. But the individual is not there; because the tunes are all arranged for him and he sings them, according to rule. The Academy. The purity of the French language. I'm getting so interested."

"I find this Lahitte a most *pretentious* fellow."

"He is not in the least what I expected a Frenchman to be like. I can't understand his being so fair."

"What is it you have undertaken?"

He was suddenly grave and impressed by the idea of the lecture . . . why would it be such good practice for her to read and correct it?

Her answer plunged him into thought from which he branched forth with sudden eagerness . . . a French translation of a Russian book revealing marvellously the interior, the self-life, of a doctor, through his training and experience in practice. It would be a revelation to English readers and she should translate it; in collaboration with him; if she would excuse the intimate subjects it necessarily dealt with. He was off and back again with the book and reading rapidly while she still pondered his grave enthusiasm over her recent undertaking. In comparison with this idea of translating a book, it seemed nothing. But that was only one of his wild notions. It would take years of evenings of hard

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work. Meanwhile some one else would do it. They would work at it together. With Saturdays and Sundays it would not take so long . . . it would set her standing within the foreign world she had touched at so many points during the last few years, and that had become, since the coming of Mr. Shatov, more and more clearly a continuation of the first beginnings at school . . . alors un faible chuchotement se fit entendre au premier . . . à l'entrée de ce bassin, des arbres . . . se fit entendre . . . alors un faible chuchotement se fit entendre . . . all one word on one tone . . . it must have been an extract from some dull mysterious story with an explanation or deliberately without an explanation; then a faint whispering was audible on the first floor; that was utterly different. It was the shape and sound of the sentences, without the meaning that was so wonderful—alors une faible parapluie se fit entendre au premier—Jan would scream, but it was just as wonderful . . . there must be some meaning in having so passionately loved the little book without having known that it was selections from French prose; in getting to Germany and finding there another world of beautiful shape and sound, apart from people and thoughts and things that happened . . . Durch die ganze lange Nacht, bis tief in den Morgen hinein . . . it was opening again, drawing her in away from the tuneless shapeless—

“Are you listening?”

“Yes, but it hasn't begun.”

“That is true. We can really omit all this introduction and at once begin.”

As the pages succeeded each other her hunger and

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fatigue changed to a fever of anxious attention.

"Well? Is not that a masterly analysis? You see. That should be translated for your Wimpole Street."

"I don't know. We are not like that. It would never occur to an English doctor to write for the general public anything that could shake its confidence in doctors. Foreigners are different. They think nothing of revealing and discussing the most awful things. It's pessimism. They *like* pessimism."

"It is a serious mistake to regard enlightenment as pessimism."

"I don't believe in Continental luminaries."

"Your prejudices are at least frank."

"I had forgotten the author was Russian. That idea of the rush of mixed subjects coming to the medical student too quickly one after the other for anything to be taken in, is awful, and perfectly true. Hosts of subjects, hosts of different theories about all of them; no general ideas. . . . Doctors have to specialize when they are boys and they remain ignorant all their lives."

"This is not only for doctors. You have touched the great problem of modern life. No man can, today, see over the whole field of knowledge. The great Leibnitz was the last to whom this was possible."

To be ignorant always, knowing one must die in ignorance. What was the use of going on? Life looked endless. Suddenly it would seem short. "Wait till you're fifty and the years pass like weeks." You would begin to see clearly all round you the things you could never do. Never go to Japan. Already it was beginning. No college.

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No wanderjahre. . . . Translating books might lead to wanderjahre.

"It's certainly a book that ought to be translated." At least there could be no more "Eminent men." There might always be some one at work somewhere who would suddenly knock him down like a nine-pin.

"Well you shall see. I will read you a passage from later, that you may judge whether you will care. I must tell you it deals of intimate matters. You must excuse."

It was not only that he thought she might object. He also realized that the English reserves between them were being swept away. It was strange that a free Russian should have these sensibilities. He read his extract through, bringing it to a close in shaken tones, his features sensitively working.

Every one ought to know. . . . It ought to be shouted from the house-tops that a perfectly ordinary case leaves the patient sans connaissance et nageant dans le sang.

"It's very interesting," she said hurriedly, "but in English it would be condemned as unsuitable for general reading."

"I thought that possible."

"The papers would solemnly say that it deals with subjects that are better veiled."

"Indeed it is remarkable. John Bull is indeed the perfect ostrich."

"Oh those men who write like that don't want them veiled from *themselves*."

"I will tell you more than that. The Paris pornographia *lives* on its English patrons."

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"Oh no; I'm sure it doesn't."

"On the contrary I assure you this is a fact. Any French bookseller will tell you. I see that this distresses you. It is not perhaps in every case so base as would appear. There is always even in quite deliberate French obscenity a certain *esprit*. These subjects lend themselves."

"Oh they don't care about the *esprit*. It's because they think they are being improper. They like to be what they call men of the world, in possession of a fund of things they think can't be talked about; you can see their silly thoughts by the way they glance at each other; it's all about nothing. What *is* obscenity? And the other half of them is *ladies*, who shout things by always carefully avoiding them; or, if they are 'racey' flatter men's topics by laughing in a pretended hilarious embarrassment, hitting them as it were, and rushing on to something else, very animated by a becoming blush. I never realized that before. But that's the secret. What *is* obscenity?"

"You have touched a most interesting problem of psychology."

"Besides Paris is full of Americans."

"It is the same proposition. They are the cousins of the English."

"I think the American 'man of the world' is much more objectionable. He is so horribly raw that he can't help boasting openly, and the American woman flatters him, openly. It's extraordinary. I mean the kind of heavy-featured fat middle-aged American woman who doesn't smoke and thinks that voting would be unseemly for women. It used to make me simply ill with fury. . . . Dr. Bunyan Hopkinson's



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brother came over for July and August two years ago. He was appalling. With a bright fair beard, and a most frightful twang; the worst I've ever heard. He used to talk incessantly, as if the whole table were waiting for his ideas. And knew everything, in the most awful superficial newspaper way. They have absolutely no souls at all. I never saw an American soul. The Canadians have. The Americans, at least the women, have reproachful ideals that they all agree about. So that they are all like one person; all the same effect. But wasn't it *screaming*, Bunyan Hopkinson's brother was called *Bacchus*. Yes. Did you ever hear anything so screaming? Isn't that enough? Doesn't it explain everything? He was a doctor too. He sat next to an elderly woman who was always scolding and preaching. She had an enormous American figure, and Guelph eyelids and Guelph cheeks coming down below her chin making great lengthways furrows on either side of it. But when Dr. Bacchus began to talk about Paris she would listen respectfully. He used always to be offering to show other men round Paris. There's no one alive, he would say, can show me anything in Parrus night-life I've not seen. *Ah*, she would say, any one can see you're a man of the *world*, doctor. It spoils the very idea of those little cabarets and whatever awful haunts there may be in Paris to think of Americans there, seeing *nothing*."

"They have certainly a most remarkable naïvety."

"I've today seen your Queen. She's just a vurry *hoamely* little old lady."

"What? What is that?"

"Then they were funny." She searched her mem-

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ory to make him go on giggling. It was extraordinary too, to discover what impressions she had gathered without knowing it, never considering or stating them to herself. He was getting them. If she ever stated them again they would be stale; practised clever talk; *that* was how talk was done . . . saying things over and over again to numbers of people, each time a little more brilliantly and the speaker a little more dead behind it. Nothing could be repeated.

“That was the same year. Mrs. Bailey had a splendid August. Eighteen Americans. I used to go down to meals just to be in the midst of the noise. You never heard anything like it in your life. If you listened without trying to distinguish anything it was *marvellous*, in the bright sunshine at breakfast. It sent you up and up, into the sky, the morning stars singing together. *No*. I mean there was something *really* wonderful about it. It reminded me of the effect that almost comes when people decide to have a Dutch concert. You know. All singing different songs at the same time. It’s *always* spoilt. People begin it prepared not to hear the whole effect. I did. I did not realize there would be a wonderful whole. And always just as the effect is beginning, two or three people break down because they cannot hold their songs, and some laugh because they are prepared only to laugh, and the unmusical people put their fingers to their ears, because they can never hear *sound*, never anything but a tune. Oh it would be so wonderful, if only it could be really *held*, every one singing for all they were worth.”

“Have you heard that the Shah preferred of a whole concert, only the tuning of the orchestra?”

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"I know. That's always supposed to be a joke. But the tuning of an orchestra, if there is enough of it at once, *is* wonderful. Why not *both*? It's the appalling way people have of liking only one thing. Liking 'good' music and disapproving of waltzes. The Germans don't."

"But when I thought of one of my sisters, I used to want to die. If she had been there we should both have yelled, without moving a muscle of our faces. Harriett is perfect for that. We learnt it in church. But when she used to twist all the fingers of her gloves into points, under the seat, and then show them to me suddenly, in the Litany" . . .

"What? What is this? No. Tell me. You were very happy with your sisters."

"That's all. She waggled them, suddenly."

"A happy childhood is perhaps the *most*-fortunate gift in life."

"You don't know you're happy."

"That is not the point. This early surrounding lingers and affects all the life."

"It's not quite true that you don't know. Because you know when you are quite young how desperately you love a place. The day we left our first home I remember putting marbles in my pocket in the nursery, not minding, only thinking I should take them out again by the *sea*, and downstairs in the garden I suddenly realized, the sun was shining on to the porch and bees swinging about amongst the roses, and I ran back and kissed the warm yellow stone of the house, sobbing most bitterly and knowing my life was at an end."

"But you were six years old. That is what is

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important. You do not perhaps realize the extent of the remaining of this free life of garden and woods with you."

"I know it is there. I often dream I am there and wake there, and for a few minutes I could draw the house, the peaked shapes of it, and the porches and French windows and the way the lawns went off into the mysterious parts of the garden; and I feel then as if going away were still to come, an awful thing that never had happened. Of course after the years in the small house by the sea, I don't remember the house, only the sea and the rocks, the house at Barnes grew in a way to be the same, but I never got over the suddenness of the end of the garden and always expected it to branch out into distances, every time I ran down it. I used to run up and down to make it more. . . ." He was no longer following with such an intentness of interest. There ought to have been more about those first years. Now, no one would ever know what they had been. . . .

"But you know, although nothing the Americans say is worth hearing, there is something wonderful about the way they go on. The way they all talk at once, nobody listening. It's because they all know what they are going to say and every one wants to say it first. They used to talk in parties; a set of people at one part of the table all screaming together towards a set at another part, and other people screaming across them at another set. The others began screaming back at once, endless questions, and if two sets had seen the same thing they all screamed together as soon as it was mentioned. I never heard one person talking alone; not in that August set. And

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there was one woman, a clergyman's wife, with a little pretty oval face and the most perfect muslin dresses which she did not appreciate, who used to begin as soon as she came in and go on right through the meal, filling up the gaps in her talk with gasps and exclamations. Whenever any place was mentioned she used to turn and put her hand over her husband's mouth till she had begun what she wanted to say, jumping up and down in her chair."

"Is it *possible?*"

"I know now why they all have such high piercing voices. It comes from talking in sets. But I always used to wonder what went on behind; in their own minds."

"Do not wonder. There is no *arrière-boutique* in these types. They are most simple."

"They don't like us. They think we are frigid; not cordial, is one of their phrases."

"That is a most superficial judgment. Stay! I have a splendid idea. We will leave for the present this large book. But why should you not immediately translate a story of Andrayeff? They are quite short and most beautiful. You will find them unlike anything you have read. I have them here. We will at once read one."

"I must go out; it will soon be too late."

"You have had no dinner? Ach, that is *monstrous*. Why did you not tell me? . . . It is half eleven. There is yet time. We will go to my *dumme August* in the East-end."

In her room, Miriam glanced at the magic pages, hungrily gathering German phrases, and all the way to Aldgate, sitting back exhausted in her corner she

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clung to them, resting in a "stube" with "Gebirge" all round it in morning and evening light. When they reached their destination she had forgotten she was in London. But the station was so remote and unknown to her that it scarcely disturbed her detachment. The wide thoroughfare into which they emerged was still and serene within its darkness behind the spread veil of street sounds, filled with the pure sweet air of adventure. The restaurant across the road was a little square of approaching golden light. It was completely strange. There was a tang of coarse tobacco in the air, but not the usual restaurant smell. There were no marble-topped tables; little square wooden-legged tables, with table-covers of red and blue chequered cotton; pewter flagons, foreigners, Germans, sturdy confident Germans sitting about. It was Germany.

"Well? Is it not perfectly dumme August?" whispered Mr. Shatov as they took an empty corner table, commanding the whole room. There was a *wooden* partition behind them, giving out life. Her fatigue left her.

"Für mich ist es absolut als wär ich in Hannover."

"At least here you shall have an honest meal. Kellner!"

She did not want to eat; only to sit and hear the deep German voices all round her and take in, without observation, kindly German forms.

"Simply you are too tired. We will have at least some strong soup and Lager."

The familiar smooth savoury broth abolished the years since she had left Germany. Once more she was finding the genuine honest German quality reflected in the completeness of their food; all of it even the



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bread, savoury and good through and through, satisfying in a way no English food was satisfying, making English food seem poor, ill-combined, either heavy and dull, or too exciting. She saw German kitchens, alles rein und sauber, blank poliert, large bony low-browed angry-voiced German servants in check dresses and blue aprons, everlastingly responsibly at work.

And here was Lager, the Lager of the booming musical German cafés. She was sure she would not like it. He was taking for granted that she was accustomed to beer, and would not know that she was having a tremendous adventure. To him it did not seem either shocking or vulgar. Protected by his unconsciousness she would get perhaps further than ever before into the secret of Germany. She took a small sip and shuddered. The foamy surface was pleasant; but the strange biting bitterness behind it was like some sudden formidable personal attack.

"That is the first time I've tasted beer," she said, "I don't like it."

"You have not yet tasted it. You must swallow, not sip."

"It makes your throat sore. It's so bitter. I always imagined beer was sweet."

"There is perhaps something a little acid in this imported Lager; but the bitterness is most good. It is this biting quality that is a most excellent apéritif. We will have also honey cakes."

The light, not too sweet, porous crisp mealiness of the little cakes was German altogether. Mr. Shatov was whispering busily. She feared he would be heard. There was not much conversation in the

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room; large deep solid sentences reverberated through it with a sound of thoughtfulness, as though the speakers were preoccupied, like travellers, talking with their eyes turned inward upon their destination. All of them appeared serious and sober.

"Just as we crossed the frontier one big fat German roused up and said in an *immense* rolling voice. 'Hier kann man wenigstens vernünftiges *Bier* haben!'"

"Ssh! They will hear."

"What then? They are here nearly all Jews."

"Jews? But they are nearly all *fair!*"

"There may be a few Germans. But many Jews are fair. But you have not told me what you think of this story."

"Oh I can *see* the man and hear his voice." . . . Nearly all the people in the room were dark. It was the man sitting near, with the large fresh fair German face who had made her imagine the room was full of Germans. But there were no hooked noses; no one in the least like Shylock. What *were* Jews? How did he know the room was full of them? Why did the idea cast a chill on the things she had brought in with her? She drew the little book from her pocket and took a long draught of Lager. It was still bitter, but the bitterness was only an astringent tang in the strange cool lively frothy tide; a tingling warmth ran through her nerves, expanding to a golden glow that flowed through the room and held her alight within itself, an elastic impalpable bodiless mind. Mr. Shatov was sitting far away at her side, in his eyes a serene communion with his surroundings. It was not his usual restaurant manner; it was strange . . . pewter was right; Lager

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was a bright tumult, frothing and flowing easily over the smooth dull metal.

Translating the phrases made them fall to pieces. She tried several renderings of a single phrase; none of them would do; the original phrase faded, and together with it just beyond her reach, the right English words. Scraps of conversation reached her from all over the room; eloquent words, fashioned easily, without thought, a perfect flowing of understanding, to and fro, without obstruction. No heaven could be more marvellous. People talked incessantly because in silence they were ghosts. A single word sounded the secret of the universe . . . there is a dead level of intelligence throughout humanity. She listened in wonder whilst she explained aloud that she had learned most of her French by reading again and again for the sake of the long even rhythm of its sentences, one book; that this was the only honest way to acquire a language. It was like the sea, each sentence a wave rolling in, rising till the light shone through its glistening crest, dropping, to give way to the next on-coming wave, the meaning gathering, accumulating, coming nearer with each rising and falling rhythm; each chapter a renewed tide monotonously repeating throughout the book in every tone of light and shade the same burden, the secret of everything in the world.

"I cannot appreciate these literary preciousities; but I am quite sure that you are wrong in confining yourself to this one French book. This mystical philosophy is *énervant*. There are many French books you should read before this man. Balzac for instance."

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She wanted to explain that she used to read novels but could not get interested in them after Emerson. They showed only one side of people, the outside; if they showed them alone, it was only to explain what they felt about other people. Then he would say Levin, Levin. But she could not attend to all this. What she had meant to say in the beginning, she now explained, was that her German, neglected so long, grew smaller and smaller, whilst, most inconveniently, her reputation for knowing German grew larger and larger. Mr. Wilson might have said that. . . .

"The Lager is doing you immensely much good."

Speech did something to things; set them in a mould that was apt to come up again; repeated, it would be dead; but perhaps one need never repeat oneself? To say the same things to different people would give them a sort of fresh life; but there would be death in oneself as one spoke. Perhaps the same thing could be said over and over again, with other things with it, so that it had a different shape, sang a different song and laughed all round itself in amongst different things.

Intoxication . . . a permanent intoxication in and out amongst life, all the time with an increasing store of good ideas about things; in time, about everything. A slight intoxication began it, making it possible to look at things from a distance, in separate wholes and make discoveries about them. It was being somewhere else, and suddenly looking up, out of completion, at distant things, that brought their meanings and the right words.

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“But you must at once finish. They are closing. It is now midnight.”

It did not matter. Nothing was at an end. Nothing would ever come to an end again. . . . She passed, talking emphatically, out into the wide dimly-lit sky-filled east-end street, and walked unconscious of fatigue, carrying Mr. Shatov along at his swiftest plunge, mile after mile, in a straight line westward along the opening avenue of her new permanent freedom from occasions. From detail to detail, snatched swiftly by the slenderest thread of coherence, she passed in easy emphatic talk, covering the bright endless prospect of her contemplation, her voice alive, thrilling with joyful gratitude, quivering now and again as it moved, possessed and controlled by the first faint dawning apprehension of some universal password, from one bright tumultuously branching thing to another, with a gratitude that poured itself out within her in a rain of tears. Mr. Shatov followed her swift migrations with solid responsive animation; he seemed for the first time to find no single thing to object to or correct; even restatement was absent, and presently he began to sing. . . .

“It is a Russian song with words of Poushkin and music of Rubinstein. Ah but it requires Chaliapin. A most profound bass. There is nothing in singing so profoundly moving as pure basso; you should hear him. He stands *alone* in Europe.”

The thronging golden multitudes moved to the tones of this great Russian voice, the deepest in the world, singing out across Europe from beyond Germany. With faltering steps, just begun, whilst now and for ever she passionately brooded on distant

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things, she was one of this elect shining army . . .  
“wandering amongst the mountains, the highest notes  
if they leapt up pure and free, in soprano, touch the  
sky.”

“That is true. But in concerts, the strength and most profound moving quality come from the bass. Ah you should hear a Russian male choir. There is not in Europe such strength and flexibility and most particularly such marvel of unanimity, making one single movement of phrase in all these many voices together. There is singing in the great Russian churches, all colourful and with a splendour of ornate decoration, singing that the most infidel could not hear unmoved.”

The Russian *voice* was melancholy poetry in itself; somewhere within the shapely rough strength of the words, was a pleading tender melancholy.

The Bloomsbury Squares were changed. It was like seeing them for the first time; before they had taken hold; and for the last time, for their spell was turning into memory. Already they were clearly seen backgrounds of which in the cold winter moonlight she could, as her feet, set in a pathway that spread throughout the world, swiftly measured them, coolly observe the varying proportions and character. Offence was removed from the tones of visitors who had in the past, in her dumb outraged presence, taken lightly upon their lips the sacred names. Within them the echo of her song mingled with the silent echoes of the footfalls and voices of these enchanted busy passengers.



## CHAPTER IV

IT was not only that it was her own perhaps altogether ignorant and lazy and selfish way of reading *everything* so that she grasped only the sound and the character of the words and the arrangement of the sentences, and only sometimes a long time afterwards, and with once read books never, anything, except in books on philosophy, of the author's meaning . . . but always the author; in the first few lines; and after that, wanting to change him and break up his shape or going about for days thinking everything in his shape. . . .

It was that there was nothing there. If there had been anything, reading so attentively, such an odd subject as Spanish literature, she would have gathered some sort of vague impression. But in all the close pages of cramped cruel pointed hand-writing she had gleaned nothing at all. Not a single fact or idea; only Mr. Lahitte; a voice like an empty balloon. . . . The lecture was a fraud. *He* was. How far did he know this? Thinking of the audience, those few who could learn quickly enough to follow his voice, waiting and waiting for something but strings of superlatives, the same ones again and again, until the large hall became a prison and the defiant yellow-grey form a tormenter, and their impatience and restlessness turned to hatred and despair, she

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pitied him. Perhaps he had not read Spanish literature. But he must have consulted numbers of books about it, and that was much more than most people did. But what could she do? She glanced at her little page of notes. . . . Break up sentences. Use participles instead of which. Vary adjectives. Have gaps and pauses here and there. Sometimes begin further off. What is picaresque? They had been written enthusiastically, seeming like inspirations, in the first pages, before she had discovered the whole of the nothingness. Now they were only alterations that were not worth making; helping an imposition and being paid for it. . . .

Stopford Brooke . . . lecturing on Browning . . . blissful moonface with a fringe of white hair, talking and talking, like song and prayer and politics, the past and the present showing together, Browning at the centre of life and outside it all over the world, and seeing forward into the future. Perfect quotations, short and long, and the end with the long description of Pompilia . . . rising and spreading and ceasing, not ending . . . standing out alive in the midst of a world still shaped by the same truths going on and on. "A marvellous piece of analysis." He had been waiting to say that to the other young man.

Introduce their philosophies of life, if any, she wrote; introduce quotations. But there was no time; quotations would have to be translated. Nothing could be done. The disaster was completely arranged. There was no responsibility. She gathered the accepted pages neatly together and began pencilling in improvements.

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. . . The pencilled sentences made a pleasant wandering decoration. The earlier ones were forgotten and unfamiliar. Re-read now, they surprised her. How had she thought of them? She had not thought of them. She had been closely following something, and they had come, quietly, in the midst of engrossment; but they were like a photograph, funny in their absurd likeness, set there side by side with the photograph of Mr. Lahitte. They were alive, gravely, after the manner of her graver self. It was a curious marvel, a revelation irrevocably put down, reflecting a certain sort of character . . . more oneself than anything that could be done socially, together with others, and yet not herself at all, but something mysterious, drawn uncalculatingly from some fund of common consent, part of a separate impersonal life she had now unconsciously confessed herself as sharing. She remained bent motionless in the attitude of writing, to discover the quality of her strange state. The morning was raw with dense fog; at her Wimpole Street ledgers she would by this time have been cramped with cold; but she felt warm and tingling with life as if she had been dancing, or for a long while in happy social contact; yet so differently; deeply and serenely alive and without the blank anxious looking for the continuance of social excitement. This something would continue, it was in herself, independently. It was as if there were some one with her in the room, peopling her solitude and bringing close around her all her past solitudes, as if it were their secret. They greeted her; justified. Never again, so long as she could sit at work and lose herself to awake with the season forgotten and

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all the circumstances of her life coming back fresh leaping, as if narrated from the fascinating life of some one else, would they puzzle or reproach her.

She drew her first page of general suggestions written so long ago that they already seemed to belong to some younger self, and copied them in ink. The sound of the pen shattered the silence like sudden speech. She listened entranced. The little strange sound was the living voice of the brooding presence. She copied each phrase in a shape that set them like a poem in the middle of the page, with even spaces between a wide uniform margin; not quite in the middle; the lower margin was wider than the upper; the poem wanted another line. She turned to the manuscript listening intently to the voice of Mr. Lahitte pouring forth his sentences, and with a joyous rush penetrated the secret of its style. It was *artificial*. There was the last line of the poem summing up all the rest. Avoid, she wrote, searching; some word was coming; it was in her mind, muffled, almost clear; avoid—it flashed through and away, just missed. She recalled sentences that had filled her with hopeless fury, examining them curiously, without anger. Avoid ornate alias. So *that* was it! Just those few minutes glancing through the pages standing by the table while the patient talked about her jolly, noisy, healthy, thoroughly *wicked* little kid, and now remembering every point he had made . . . extraordinary. But this was life! These strange unconsciously noticed things, living on in one, coming together at the right moment, a part of a *reality*.

Rising from the table she found her room strange, the new room she had entered on the day of her

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arrival. She remembered drawing the cover from the table by the window and finding the ink-stains. There they were in the warm bright circle of mid-morning lamplight, showing between the scattered papers. The years that had passed were a single short interval leading to the restoration of that first moment. Everything they contained centred there; her passage through them, the desperate graspings and droppings, had been a coming back. Nothing would matter now that the paper-scattered lamp-lit circle was established as the centre of life. Everything would be an everlastingly various joyful coming back. Held up by this secret place, drawing her energy from it, any sort of life would do that left this room and its little table free and untouched.

## CHAPTER V

THE spell of the ink-stained table had survived the night. Moving about, preparing for today, she turned continually towards the window-space, as to an actual presence, and was answered by the rising within her of a tide of serenity, driving her forward in a stupor of confidence, impervious to strain and pain. It was as if she had entered a companionship that now spread like a shield between her and the life she had so far dealt with unaided. . . .

The week of working days, standing between her and next Sunday's opportunity, was a small space that would pass in a dream; the scattered variously-developing interests of life outside Wimpole Street changed, under her eyes, from separate bewildering competitively attractive scraps of life, to pleasantly related resources, permitted distractions from an engrossment so secure that she could, without fear of loss, move away and forget it.

She felt eager to jest. Ranged with her friends she saw their view of her own perpetually halting scrupulousness and marvelled at their patient loyalty. She shared the exasperated intolerance of people who disliked her. . . . It could be disarmed . . . by fresh, surprising handling. . . . Because, she asked herself scornfully as she opened the door to go down-



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stairs, she had corrected Mr. Lahitte's unspeakable lecture? No. Sitting over there, forgetting, she had let go . . . and found something . . . and waking again had seen distant things in their right proportions. But leaving go, not going through life clenched, would mean losing oneself, passing through, not driving in, ceasing to affect and be affected. But the forgetfulness was itself a more real life, if it made life disappear and then show only as a manageable space and at last only as an indifferent distance . . . a game to be played, or even not played. . . . It meant putting life and people second; only entering life to come back again, *always*. This new joy of going into life, the new beauty, on everything, was the certainty of coming back. . . .

She was forgetting something important to the day; the little volume of stories for her coat pocket. Anxiety at her probable lateness tried to invade her as she made her hurried search. She beat it back and departed indifferently, shutting the door of a seedy room in a cheap boarding-house, neither hers nor another's, a lodger's passing abode, but holding a little table that was herself, alive with her life, and whose image sprang, set for the day, centrally into the background of her thoughts as she ran wondering if there were time for breakfast, down to the dining-room. St. Pancras clock struck nine as she poured out her tea. Mr. Shatov followed up his greeting with an immediate plunge into unfamiliar speech which she realized, in the midst of her wonderment over Mr. Lahitte's presence at early breakfast, was addressed to herself. She responded absently, standing at the tea-tray with her toast.

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"You do not take your fish? Ah, it is a pity. It is true it has stood since half-nine."

"Asseyez-vous, mademoiselle. I find; the breakfast hour; *charming*. At this hour one always is, or should be; gay."

"Mps; if there is time; yes, Sunday breakfast."

"Still you are gay. That is good. We will not allow philosophy; to darken; these most happy few moments."

"There are certain *limits* to cheerfulness," bellowed Mr. Shatov. They had had some mighty collision. She glanced round.

"None; within the purview of my modest intelligence; none. Always would I rather be; a cheerful coal-heaver; than a philosopher who is learned, dull, and more depressing than the *bise du nord*."

That was meant for Mr. Shatov! The pale sensitive features were quivering in control . . . her fury changed to joy as she leapt between them murmuring reflectively out across the table that she agreed, but had met many depressing coal-heavers and knew nothing about philosophers dull or otherwise. In the ensuing comfortable dead silence she wandered away marvelling at her eloquence. . . . *Cats* said that sort of thing, with disarming smiles. Was that what was called sarcasm? How fearfully funny. She had been sarcastic. To a Frenchman. Perhaps she had learned it from him. Mr. Shatov overtook her as she was getting on to a 'bus at the corner.

"You do not go walkingly?" he bellowed from the pavement. Poor little man; left there with his day and his loneliness till six o'clock.

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"All right," she said jumping off, "we'll walk. I'll be late. I don't mind."

They swept quickly along, looking ahead in silence. Presently he began to sing. Miriam dropped her eyes to the pavement, listening. How unconsciously wise he was. How awful it would have been if she had gone on the omnibus. Here he was safe, healing and forgetting. There *was* some truth in the Frenchman's judgment. It wasn't that he was a dull philosopher. Lahitte was utterly incapable of measuring his big sunlit mind; but there was something, in his manner, or bearing, something that many people would not like, an absence of gaiety; it was true, the Frenchman's quick eye had fastened on it. Who wanted gaiety? There was a deep joyfulness in his booming song that was more than gaiety. His rich dark vitality challenged the English air as he plunged along, beard first, without thoughts, his eyebrows raised in the effort of his eager singing. He was quite unaware that there was no room for singing more than below one's breath, however quickly one walked, in the Euston Road in the morning.

She disposed herself to walk unconcernedly past the row of lounging overalled figures. Sullen hostile staring would not satisfy them this morning. The song would rouse them to some open demonstration. They were endless; muttering motionlessly to each other in their immovable lounging. Surely he must feel them. "Go 'ome," she heard, away behind. . . . "Blooming foreigner;" close by, the tall lean swarthy fellow, with the handsome grubby face. That he *must* have heard. She fancied his song recoiled, and wheeled

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sharply back, confronting the speaker, who had just spat into the middle of the pavement.

"Yes," she said, "he is a foreigner, and he is my friend. What do you *mean?*" The man's gazing face was broken up into embarrassed awkward youth. Mr. Shatov was safely ahead. She waited, her eyes on the black-rimmed expressionless blue of the eyes staring from above a rising flush. In a moment she would say, it is abominable and simply *disgraceful*, and sweep away and never come up this side of the road again. A little man was speaking at her side, his cap in his hand. They were all moving and staring. "Excuse me miss," he began again in a quiet, thick, hurrying voice, as she turned to him. "Miss, we know the sight of you going up and down. Miss, he ain't good enough for ya."

"Oh," said Miriam, the sky falling about her. She lingered a moment speechless, looking at no one, sweeping over them a general disclaiming smile, hoping she told them how mistaken they all were and how nice she thought them, she hurried away to meet Mr. Shatov waiting a few yards off. The *darlings*. In all these years of invisible going up and down. . . .

"Well?" he laughed, "what is this?"

"British workmen. I've been lecturing them."

"On what?"

"In general. Telling them what I think."

"Excellent. You will yet be a socialist." They walked on, to the sound of his resumed singing. Presently the turning into Wimpole Street was in sight. His singing must end. Dipping at a venture she stumbled upon material for his arrest.

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"It is nay-cessary; *deere* bruthren"; she intoned dismally in a clear interval, "to obtain; the *mAhstery*; o-ver-the *Vile*; bhuddy."

"What? What?" he gurgled delightedly, slackening his pace. "Please say this once more."

Summoning the forgotten figure, straining out over the edge of the pulpit she saw that there was more than the shape and sound of his abruptly ending whine. She saw the incident from Mr. Shatov's point of view and stood still to laugh his laugh; but it was not her kind of joke.

"It was in a University church, presided over by a man they all say has a European reputation; it was in Lent; this other man was a visitor, for Lent. That was the beginning of his sermon. He began at once, with a yell, flinging half out of the pulpit, the ugliest person I have ever seen."

"Hoh," shouted Mr. Shatov from the midst of immense gusts of laughter, "that is a most supreme instance of unconscious ironic commentary. But really, please you shall say this to me once more."

If she said, you know he was quite sincere, the story would be spoiled. This was the kind of story popular people told. To be amusing must mean always to be not quite truthful. But the sound. She was longing to hear it again. Turning to face the way they had come, she gave herself up to howling the exhortation down the empty park-flanked vista.

"It is a chef d'œuvre," he sighed.

He ought not to be here she irritably told herself, emerging as they turned and took the few steps to her street, tired and scattered and hopelessly late, into the forgotten chill of her day. It was all very well

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for him with his freedom and leisure to begin the first thing in the morning with things that belonged to the end of the day. . . . She took swift distracted leave of him at the corner and hurried along the length of the few houses to her destination. Turning remorsefully at the doorstep to smile her farewell, she saw the hurrying form of Mr. Hancock crossing the road with grave appraising glance upon the strange figure bowing towards her bareheaded in the wind from the top of the street. He had seen her loitering, standing still, had heard her howls. Mercifully the door opened behind her, and she fled within . . . the corner of the very street that made him, more than any other street, look foreign, and, in the distance, disgraceful. . . .

For days she read the first two stories in the little book, carrying it about with her, uneasy amongst her letters and ledgers unless it were in sight. The project of translation vanished in an entranced consideration at close quarters of some strange quality coming each time from the printed page. She could not seize or name it. Both stories were sad, with an unmitigated relentless sadness, casting a shadow over the spectacle of life. But some spell in their weaving, something abrupt and strangely alive, remaining alive, in the text, made a beauty that outlived the sadness. They were *beautiful*. English people would not think so. They would only see tragedy of a kind that did not occur in the society they knew. They would consider Andrayeff a morbid foreigner, and a liking for the stories an unhealthy pose. Very well. It was an unhealthy pose. The strange beauty in the well known sentences that yet were every time fresh and



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surprising, was an unshareable secret. Meanwhile the presence of the little book exorcised the everyday sense of the winding off of days in an elaborate unchanging circle of toil.

To Michael Shatov she poured out incoherent enthusiasm, "Translate, translate," he cried; and when she assured him that no one would want to read, he said, each time, "no matter; this work will be good for you." But when at last suddenly in the middle of a busy morning, she began turning into rounded English words the thorny German text, she eluded his enquiries and hid the book and all signs of her work even from herself. Writing she forgot, and did not see the pages. The moment she saw them, there was a sort of half-shame in their exposure, even to the light of day. And always in transcribing them a sense of guilt. Not, she was sure, a conviction of mis-spending her employer's time. Had not they agreed in response to her graceless demands in the course of that first realization of the undeveloping nature of her employments, that she should use chance intervals of leisure on work of her own? But even abusing this privilege, writing sudden long absorbing letters in the best part of the morning with urgent business waiting all round her, had brought no feeling of guilt; only a bright enclosing sense of dissipation; a sort of spreading, to be justified by the shortness of her leisure, of its wild free quality over a part of the too-long day. It was in some way from the work itself that this strange gnawing accusation came, and as strangely, each time she had fairly begun, there came, driving out the sense of guilt, an overwhelming urgency; as if she were running a race.

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Presently everything in her life existed only for the sake of the increasing bunch of pencilled half-sheets distributed between the leaves of her roomy blotter. She thanked her circumstances, into whose shape this secret adventure had stolen unobserved and sunk, leaving the surface unchanged, and finding, ready for its sustaining, an energy her daily work had never tapped, from the depth of her heart. In the evenings she put away the thought of her pages lest she could find herself speaking of them to Mr. Shatov.

But they would arrive suddenly in her mind, thrilling her into animation, lighting up some remote part of her consciousness from which would come pell-mell, emphatic and incoherently eloquent, statements to which she listened eagerly. Mr. Shatov, too, reduced to a strangely silenced listener, and dropping presently off along some single side issue, she would be driven back by the sheer pain of the effort of contraction, and would impatiently bring the sitting to an end and seek solitude. It was as if she were confronted by some deeper convinced self who did, unknown to her, take sides on things, both sides, with equal emphasis, impartially, but with a passion that left her in an entrancement of longing to discover the secret of its nature. For the rest of the evening this strange self seemed to hover about her, holding her in a serenity undisturbed by reflection.

Sometimes the memory of her work would leap out when a conversation was flagging, and lift her as she sat inert, to a distance whence the dulled expiring thread showed suddenly glowing, looping forward into an endless bright pattern interminably

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animated by the changing lights of fresh inflowing thoughts. During the engrossing incidents of her day's work she forgot them completely, but in every interval they were there; or not there; she had dreamed them. . . .

With each fresh attack on the text, the sense of guilt grew stronger; falling upon her the moment, having read the page of German, she set to work to apply the discoveries she had made. It was as if these discoveries were the winning, through some inborn trick of intelligence not her own by right of any process of application or of discipline, of an unfair advantage. She sought within her for a memory that might explain the acquisition of the right of escape into this life within, outside, securely away from, the life of everyday. The school memories that revived in her dealings with her sentences were the best, the most secret and the happiest, the strands where the struggle to acquire had been all a painless interested adventuring. The use of this strange faculty, so swift in discovery, so relentless in criticism, giving birth, as one by one the motley of truths urging its blind movements, came recognizably into view, to such a fascinating game of acceptance and fresh trial, produced in the long run when the full balance was struck, an overweight of joy bought without price.

There was no longer unalleviated pain in the first attack on a fresh stretch of the text. The knowledge that it could by three stages, laborious but unchanging and certain in their operation, reach a life of its own, the same in its whole effect, and yet in each detail so different to the original, radiated

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joy through the whole slow process. It was such a glad adventure, to get down on the page with a blunt stump of pencil in quivering swift thrilled fingers the whole unwieldy literal presentation, to contemplate, plunging thus roughshod from language, to language, the strange lights shed in turn upon each, the revelation of mutually enclosed inexpandible meanings, insoluble antagonisms of thought and experience, flowing upon the surface of a stream where both were one; to see, through the shapeless mass the approaching miracle of shape and meaning.

The vast entertainment of this first headlong ramble down the page left an enlivenment with which to face the dark length of the second journey, its separate single efforts of concentration, the recurring conviction of the insuperability of barriers, the increasing list of discarded attempts, the intervals of hours of interruption, teased by problems that dissolved into meaninglessness, and emerged more than ever densely obstructive, the sudden almost ironically cheerful simultaneous arrival of several passable solutions; the temptation to use them, driven off by the wretchedness accompanying the experiment of placing them even in imagination upon the page, and at last the snap of relinquishment, the plunge down into oblivion of everything but the object of contemplation, perhaps ill-sustained and fruitful only of a fury of irritated exhaustion, postponing further effort, or through the entertaining distraction of a sudden irrelevant play of light, turned to an out-branching series of mental escapades, leading, on emergence, to a hurried scribbling, on fresh pages, of statements which proved when read later with

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clues and links forgotten, unintelligible; but leading always, whether directly in one swift movement of seizure, or only at the end of protracted divings, to the return, with the shining fragment, whose safe placing within the text made the pages, gathered up in an energy flowing forward transformingly through the interval, towards the next opportunity of attack, electric within her hands.

The serene third passage, the original banished in the comforting certainty that the whole of it was represented, the freedom to handle until the jagged parts were wrought into a pliable whole, relieved the pressure of the haunting sense of trespass, and when all was complete it vanished into peace and a strange unimpatient curiosity and interest. She read from an immense distance. The story was turned away from her towards people who were waiting to read and share what she felt as she read. It was no longer even partly hers; yet the thing that held it together in its English dress was herself, it had her expression, as a portrait would have, so that by no one in her sight or within range of any chance meeting with herself might it ever be contemplated. And for herself it was changed. Coming between her and the immediate grasp of the text were stirring memories; the history of her labour was written between the lines; and strangely, moving within the whole, was the record of the months since Christmas. On every page a day or a group of days. It was a diary. . . . Within it were incidents that for a while had dimmed the whole fabric to indifference. And passages stood out, recalling, together with the memory of overcoming their difficulty, the dis-

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solution of annoyances, the surprised arrival on the far side of overwhelming angers. . . .

The second story lay untouched, wrapt in its magic. Contemplating the way, with its difference, it enhanced the first and was enhanced by it, she longed to see the two side by side and found, while she hesitated before the slow scattering process of translation, a third that set her headlong at work towards the perfect finished group. There was no weariness in this second stretch of labour. Behind her lay the first story, a rampart, of achievement and promise, and ahead, calling her on, the one that was yet to be attempted, difficult and strange, a little thread of story upon a background of dark thoughts, like a voice heard through a storm. Even the heaviest parts of the afternoon could be used, in an engrossed forgetfulness of time and place. Time pressed. The year was widening and lifting too rapidly towards the heights of June when everything but the green world, fresh gleaming in parks and squares through the London swelter, sweeping with the tones of spring and summer mingled amongst the changing trees, towards September, would fade from her grasp and disappear.



## CHAPTER VI

WELL. What did he say?"  
"Oh, nothing; he made a great opportunity."  
He didn't like the stories."

"Remarkable!"

"I did it all the wrong way. When I accepted their invitation I wrote that I was bringing down some translations of the loveliest short stories I had ever read." I was suddenly proud, in Lyons, of remembering "short stories" and excited about having something written to show him at last. The sentence felt like an entry into their set.

"If he did not agree with this I pity him."

"I don't know how it would have been if I had said nothing at all." He might have said look here this is good stuff. You must do something with this.

"I tell you again this man is superficial."

"He said the sentiment was gross and that they were feeble in construction." Waiting, in the window seat, with the large fresh light from the sea pouring in from behind across the soft clear buffs and greens of the room; weaving for Alma, with the wonder of keeping him arrested, alone in his study, with his eyes on her written sentences, a view of the London life as eventful, enviable leisure; the door opening at last, the swift compact entry of the little

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figure with the sheaf of manuscript, the sudden lifting jubilation of the light; the eager yielding to the temptation to enhance the achievement by a disclaiming explanation of the difficult circumstances, the silencing minatory finger—wait, wait, you're taking it the wrong way—and at last the high-pitched, colourless, thinking voice in brief comprehensive judgment; the shattering of the bright scene, the end of the triumphant visit, with a day still to pass, going about branded as an admirer of poor stuff.

“That is no *opinion*. It is simply a literary finessing. I will tell you *more*. This judgment indicates an *immense* blindness. There is in Andrayeff a directness and simplicity of feeling towards life that is entirely lacking in this man.”

“Mm. Perhaps the Russians are more simple; less . . . civilized.”

“Simplicity and directness of feeling does not necessarily indicate a less highly organized psychological temperament.”

“I know what he meant. Andrayeff does try deliberately to work on your feelings. I felt that when I was writing. But the pathos of those little boys and the man with the Chinese mask is his *subject*. What he does is artistic exaggeration.” That is Art? Light and shade; . . . a “masterly study” of a little boy . . . ?

“Very well then. What is the matter?”

“No, but I'm just thinking the whole trouble is that life is not pathetic. People don't feel pathetic; or never *altogether* pathetic. There is something else; that's the worst of novels, something that has to be left out. Tragedy; curtain. But there never

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is a curtain and even if there were, the astounding thing is that there is *anything* to let down a curtain on; so *astounding* that you can't feel really, completely, things like 'happiness' or 'tragedy'; they are both the same, a half-statement. Everybody is the same really, inside, under all circumstances. There's a dead-level of astounding . . . *something*."

"I cannot follow you in all this. But you may not thus lightly deny tragedy."

"He also said that the translation was as good as it could be. . . . You've brought it off. That's the way a translation ought to be done. It's slick and clean and extraordinarily well Englished. . . ."

"Well? Well? Are you not satisfied?"

"Then he said in a contemptuous sort of way, 'you could make from two to three hundred a year at this sort of thing.'"

"But that is most excellent. You should most certainly try this."

"I don't believe it. He *says* that kind of thing."

"He ought to know."

"I don't know. He said in a large easy way 'you'd get seven or eight guineas apiece for these things, and then do them in a book.'"

"Well?"

"Everybody would be doing it if it were so easy."

"You are really remarkable. A good translation is most rare; particularly a good English translation. You have seen these Tolstoy's. I have not met in German or French anything so vile. It is a whole base trade."

"The public does not know. And if these things sell why should publishers pay for good translations?"

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It's like machine and hand-made embroidery. It does not pay to do good work. I've often heard translations are badly paid and I can quite understand it. It could be done in a factory at an immense pace."

"You are right. I have known a group of poor Russian students translate a whole book in a single night. But you will not find cynical vulgarization of literature anywhere but in England and America. It is indeed remarkable to the foreigner the way in this country the profession of letters has become a speculation. Never before I came here did I meet this idea of writing for a living, in this naïve widespread form. There is something very bad in it." Miriam surveyed the green vista, thinking guiltily of her envy and admiration of the many young men she had met at the Wilsons' who were mysteriously "writing" or "going to write," of her surprise and disappointment in meeting here and there things they had written . . . don't, Miss Henderson . . . *don't* take up . . . a journalistic *career* on the strength of being able to write; as badly as Jenkins. Editors—poor dears—are *beleaguered*, by aspiring relatives. She thought out now, untrammelled by the distraction of listening to the way he formed his sentences, the meaning of these last words . . . it spread a chill over the wide stretch of sunlit grass; in the very moments that were passing, the writing world was going actively on, the clever people who had ideas and style and those others, determined, besieging, gradually making themselves into writers, indistinguishable by most readers, from the others, sharing, even during their dreadful beginnings, in the social

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distinctions and privileges of "writers," and all of them, the clever ones and the others, quite untroubled by any sense of guilt, and making, when they were all together, a social atmosphere that was, in spite of its scepticism, and its scorn of everyday life, easier to breathe than any other. But being burdened with a hesitating sense of guilt, unable to be really interested in the things clever people wrote about, being beguiled by gross sentimentality because of its foreign dress and the fascination of transforming it, meant belonging outside the world of clever writers, tried in their balance and found wanting; and cut off from the world of innocent unconscious determined aspirants by a mysterious fear.

It was mean to sit waiting for life to throw up things that would distract one for a while from the sense of emptiness. Sitting moving about from place to place, in the dress of the period. Being nowhere, one had no right even to the dress of the period. In the bottom of the lake . . . hidden, and forgotten. Round the far-off lake were feathery green trees, not minding. She sat imagining their trunks, filmed over with the murk of London winters, but all the more beautiful now, standing out black amongst the clouds of green. There were trees in the distance ahead, trees, forgotten. She was here to look at them. It was urgent, important. All this long time and she had never once looked. She lifted her eyes cautiously, without moving, to take in the wide belt beyond the stretch of grass. It was perfect. Full spring complete, prepared and set there, ungrudgingly, demanding nothing but love; embanked between the sky and the grass, a dense perfect shape

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of various pure colour, an effect, that would pass; but she had seen it. The sharp angle of its edge stood out against a farther, far-off belt of misty green, with here and there a dark maroon blot of copper beech.

"Whatever happens, as long as one lives, there is the spring."

"Do not be too sure of this."

"Of course, if the world suddenly came to an end."

"This appreciation of spring is merely a question of youth."

"You can't be sure."

"On the contrary. Do you imagine for instance that this old woman on the next seat feels the spring as you do?"

Miriam rose unable to look; wishing she had come alone; or had not spoken. The green vistas moved all about her, dazzling under the height of sky. "I'm perfectly sure I shall always feel the spring; perhaps more and more." She escaped into irrelevant speech, hurrying along so that he should hear incompletely until she had firm hold of some far-off topic; dreading the sound of his voice.

The flower-beds were in sight, gleaming in the gaps between the tree trunks along the broad walk . . . ragged children were shouting and chasing each other round the fountain. "I must always here think," he said as they passed through the wicket gate, "of this man who preaches for the conversion of infidels, Jews, Christians, and other unbelievers."

She hurried on preparing to face the rows of Saturday afternoon people on the chairs and seats along the avenue, their suspicious English eyes on



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her scrappy, dowdy, out-of-date English self and her extraordinary looking foreigner. Her spirits lifted. But they must be walking quickly and talking. The staring self-revealing faces must see that it was a privilege to have converse with any one so utterly strange and far away from their English life.

"I'm not interested in him," she said as they got into their stride.

"Why not?"

"I don't know why. I can't fix my thoughts on him; or any of these people who yell at crowds." Not quite that; but it made a sentence and fitted with their walk.

"It is perhaps that you are too individualistic," panted Mr. Shatov. There was no opening in this for an appearance of easy conversation; the words were leaping and barking round her like dogs.

But she turned swiftly leading the way down a winding side path and demanding angrily as soon as they were alone how it was possible to be too individualistic.

"I agree to a certain extent that it is impossible. A man is first himself. But the peril is of being cut off from his fellow creatures."

"Why *peril*? Men descend to meet. Are you a socialist? Do you believe in the opinions of mediocre majorities?"

"Why this adjective? Why mediocre? No, I would call myself rather one who believes in the *race*."

"*What* race? The race is nothing without individuals."

"What is an individual without the *race*?"

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"An individual, with a consciousness; or a soul, whatever you like to call it. The race, apart from individuals is nothing at all."

"You have introduced here several immense questions. There is the question as to whether a human being isolated from his fellows would retain any human characteristics. Your great Buckle has considered this in relation to the problem of heredity. But aside of this, has the race not a soul and an individuality? Greater than that of its single parts?"

"Certainly not. The biggest thing a race does is to produce a few big individualities."

"The biggest thing that the race does is that it *goes on*. Individuals perish."

"You don't know that they do."

"That is speculation; without evidence. I have the most complete evidence that the race survives."

"It may die, according to science."

"That also is a speculation. But what is certain is—that the greatest individual is great only as he gives much to the race; to his fellow creatures. Without this, individuality is pure-negative."

"Individuality *cannot* be negative."

"There speaks the Englishwoman. It is certainly England's highest attainment that the rights of the individual are sacred here. But even this is not complete. It is still impeded by class prejudice."

"I haven't any class prejudice."

"You are wrong; believe me you have immensely these prejudices. I could quite easily prove this to you. You are in many ways most exceptionally for

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an Englishwoman emancipated. But you are still pure-Tory."

"That is only my stamp. I can't help that. But I myself have no prejudices."

"They are so far in you unconscious." He spoke with extreme gentleness, and Miriam looked uneasily ahead, wondering whether with this strange knowledge at her side she might be passing forward to some fresh sense of things that would change the English world for her. English prejudices. He saw them as clearly as he saw that she was not beautiful. And gently, as if they were charming as well as funny to him. Their removal would come; through a painless association. For a while she would remain as she was. But even seeing England from his point of view, was being changed; a little. The past, up to the last few moments, was a life she had lived without knowing that it was a life lived in special circumstances and from certain points of view. Now, perhaps moving away from it, these circumstances and points of view suddenly became a possession, full of fascinating interest. But she had lived blissfully. Something here and there in his talk *threatened* happiness.

He seemed to see people only as members of nations, grouped together with all their circumstances. Perhaps everything could be explained in this way. . . . All her meaning for him was her English heredity, a thing he seemed to think the finest luck in the world, and her free English environment, the result of it; things she had known nothing about until he came, smiling at her ignorance

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of them, and declaring the ignorance to be the best testimony . . . that was it; he gave her her nationality and surroundings, the fact of being England to him made everything easy. There was no need to do or be anything, individual. It was too easy. It must be demoralizing . . . just sitting there basking in being English. . . . Everything she did, everything that came to her in the outside world turned out to be demoralizing . . . too easy . . . some *fraud* in it. . . . But the pity she found herself suddenly feeling for all English people who had not intelligent foreign friends gave her courage to go on. Meanwhile there was an unsettled troublesome point. Something that could not be left.

"Perhaps," she said, "I daresay. But at any rate, I have an open mind. Do you think that the race is *sacred*, and has purposes, super-man you know what I mean, Nietzsche, and that individuals are fitted up with the instincts that keep them going, just to blind them to the fact that they don't matter?"

"If one must use these terms, the race is *certainly* more sacred than the individual."

"Very well then; I know what I think. If the sacred race plays tricks on conscious human beings, using them for its own sacred purposes and giving them an unreal sense of mattering, I don't care a button for the race and I'd rather kill myself than serve its purposes. Besides, the instincts of self preservation, and reproduction are *not* the only human motives . . . they are not human at all. . . ."

## CHAPTER VII

THE picturesque building had been there, just round the corner, all these years, without once attracting her interested notice. The question she directed towards it, crossing the road for a nearer view, went forth, not from herself, but from the presence, close at her side, of Michael Shatov. During the hour spent in her room, facing the empty evening, she had been aware of nothing, outside the startling disturbance of her own movements, but the immense silence he had left. Driven forth to walk away its hours out of doors, she found, accompanying her through the green-lit evening squares, the tones and gestures of his voice, the certainty, that so long as she should frequent the neighbourhood, she would retain the sense of his companionship. The regions within her, of unexpressed thought and feeling, to which he had not reached, were at once all about her as she made her old, familiar, unimpeded escape through the front door, towards the blur of feathery green standing in the bright twilight at the end of the grey street; but beyond these inner zones, restored in a tumult of triumphant assertion of their indestructibility, the outer difficult life of expression and association was changed. If, as she feared, he should finally disappear into the new world towards which, with such

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urgent irritated determination, she had driven him, she would, for life, have reaped a small fund of his Russian courage and indifference. . . . It was with his impulse and interest, almost it seemed, actually in his person, that she drew up in front of the placard at the side of the strange low ecclesiastical looking porch. But as she read its contents, he left her, sped into forgetfulness by the swift course of her amazement. She had come, leaving her room at exactly the right moment, directly, by appointment, to this spot. Glancing once more for perfect assurance, at the liberal invitation printed in large letters at the foot of the heavenly announcement, she went boldly into the porch.

At the top of the shallow flight of grey stone steps up which she passed almost directly from the ecclesiastical doorway, a large black-draped figure, surmounted by the sweeping curves of an immense black hat voluminously swathed in a gauze veil of pale grey, stood bent towards a small woman standing on the step below her in dingy indoor black. The large outline, standing generously out below the broad low stone archway curving above the steps, against the further grey stone of what appeared to be part of a low ceiled corridor, was in extraordinary contrast to the graciously bending, surrendered attitude of the figure. Passing close to the group, Miriam caught a glimpse of large plump features, bold eyebrows, and firm dark eyes. The whole face, imagined as unscreened, was rounded, simple and undistinguished; blurred by the veil, it swam, without edges, a misty full moon. Through the veil came a voice that thrilled her as she moved on, led by a



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card bearing an arrowed instruction, down the grey stone corridor, with the desire for immediate audible mimicry. The behaviour of the voice was a perfect confirmation of deliberate intentional blurring of the large face. The little scanty frugally upstanding woman who appeared to be of the artisan class, was either a humorous brick, or a toady, or of the old-fashioned respectful servant type, to stand it. The superfluous statement might, at least, even if the voice had become second nature, she might be thirty, have been delivered at an ordinary conversational pace. But to make the unimportant comment in the deliberately refined distressed ladylike voice, with pauses, as if every word were a precious gift . . . she was waiting for some occasion, keeping her manner going, and the little woman had to stand out the performance.

On her way down the corridor she met a young man with a long neck above a low collar, walking like an undergraduate, with a rapid lope and a forward hen-like jerk of the head, but with kind religious looking eyes. Underneath his conforming manner and his English book and talk-found thoughts, he was acutely miserable, but never alone long enough to find it out; never even long enough to feel his own impulses. Two girls came swiftly by, bare-headed, in reform dresses, talking eagerly in high-pitched out-turned cultured voices, their uncommunicating selves watchfully entrenched behind the polite Norman idiom. She carried on their manner of speech at lightning speed in her mind, watching its effect upon everything it handled, of damming up, shaping, excluding all but ready-made thought and opinion.

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Just ahead was an arched doorway and a young man with a sheaf of pamphlets standing within it. "It may," she announced in character to an imaginary companion, "prove necessary to have some sort of conversational interchange with this individual." Certainly it left one better prepared for the interview than saying, "Good Lord shall we have to *say* something to this creature?" She got safely through the doorway, exchanging a slight bow with the young man as he provided her with a syllabus, and entered a large lofty quietly-lit room, where a considerable audience sat facing a raised platform more brightly illuminated, and from which they were confronted by a row of seated forms. She went down the central gangway, bold in her desire for a perfect hearing and slipped into a seat in the second row of chairs. The chairman was taking his place and in the dying down of conversation she heard a quiet flurry of draperies approaching with delicate apologetic rhythm up the gangway. It was the tall young woman. She passed, a veiled figure with bent head and floating scarf, along the little passage between the front row of the audience and the fern-edged platform, upon which she presently emerged, taking her place next to a lady who now rose and came forward, tall and black robed, and whose face, sharply pointing beneath the shadow of a plummy hat, had the expression of an eagle searching the distance with calm piercing eyes. In rousing ringing grievous tones she begged to be allowed to precede the chairman with an important announcement. Miriam inwardly groaned as the voice chid tragically on, demanding a realization on the part

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of all, of the meaning for London of the promised arrival in its midst of a world-famed authority in Greek letters. She felt the audience behind her quelled into absolute stillness, and took angry refuge in the cover of her syllabus. "The Furthermore Settlement," she read, printed boldly at the head of the page. It was one of those missions; to bring culture amongst the London poor . . . "devoted young men from the Universities." Those girls in the corridor, wrapped in their code, were doing "settlement work." They did not look philanthropic. What they loved most was the building, the grey stone corridors and archways, and being away from home on a prolonged adventure, free to weave bright colours along the invisible edges of life. She could not imagine them ever becoming in the least like the elderly philanthropists on the platform. But they were not free. The place was a sort of monastery of culture. If they wore habits they would be free and deeply inspiring. But they went about dressed longingly in the colours of sunlit landscapes, and lived their social life with ideas. There was something monastic about the lofty hall, with its neutral tinted walls and high-placed windows. But the place was modern and well-ventilated, even sternly chilly. Turning on her shoulder to examine the dutiful audience, she was startled by its effect of massed intellectuality. These people were certainly not the poor of the neighbourhood. By far the larger number were men, and wherever she looked she met faces from which she turned quickly away lest she should smile her pleasure. Even those that were heavy with stoutness and beards had the same lit

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moving look of kindly adventurous thought. They were a picked gathering; like the Royal Institution; but more glowing. She turned back to the platform in high hope amidst the outburst of applause greeting the retirement of the distressful lady and deepening to enthusiasm as there emerged timidly from behind one of the large platform screens a tall figure in evening dress, a great grown-up boy, with a large fresh face and helpless straight hanging arms and hands. He sat big and fixed, like an idol, whilst the chairman standing bowing over his table hurriedly remarked that an introduction was superfluous, and gazed at the audience with large moist blue eyes that seemed permanently open and expressionless and yet to pray for protection, or permission to retreat once more behind his screen. Miriam pitied him from the bottom of her heart and saw with relief when he rose that he produced a roll of papers for which a little one-legged ecclesiastical reading desk was conveniently waiting. He was going to read. But he placed his papers with large incapable fingers and she feared they would flutter to the ground, till he turned and took one fumbling expressionless step clear of the little desk and standing just as he was, his arms hanging once more heavy and helpless at his side, his eyes motionlessly fixed neither on the distance nor on any part of the audience, as if sightlessly focussing everything before him, began, without movement, or warning gesture, to speak. With the first sound of his voice, Miriam surrendered herself to breathless listening. It sounded out, at conversational pitch, with a colourless serenity that instantly explained his bearing, revealing him beyond the region either of

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diffidence or temerity. It was a voice speaking to no one, in a world emptied of everything that had gone before.

"The progress of philosophy," went the words, in letters of gold across the dark void, "is by a series of systems; that of science by the constant addition of small facts to accumulated knowledge." In the slight pause Miriam held back from the thoughts flying out in all directions round the glowing words, they would come again, if she could memorize the words from which they were born, coolly, registering the shape and length of the phrases and the leading terms. Before the voice began again she had read and re-read many times; driving back an exciting intruder trying, from the depths of her mind to engage her on the subject of the time-expanding swiftness of thought.

"A system," pursued the voice, "very generally corrects the fallacy of the preceding system, and leans perhaps in the opposite direction." She flushed warm beneath the pressure of her longing to remain cool. . . . "Thus the movements of philosophic thought may be compared to the efforts of a drunken man to reach his home." The blue eyes remained unaltered, while the large fresh face expanded with a smiling radiance. He was a darling. "He reels against the wall to his right and gains an impetus which sends him staggering to the left and so on; his progress being a series of zigzags. But in the end he gets home. And we may hope that philosophy will do the same, though the road seems at times unnecessarily broad."

He turned back to his papers, leaving his sentence

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on the air in an intense silence through which Miriam felt the eager expectancy of the audience flow and hang waiting, gathered towards the fresh centre whence, unless he suddenly vanished, would come, through the perfect medium of the unobstructive voice, his utmost presentation of reasons for the tantalizing hope.

At the end of the lecture she sat hurriedly sorting and re-sorting what she had gleaned; aware that her attention had again and again wandered off with single statements that had appealed to her, longing to communicate with other members of the audience in the hope of filling up the gaps. Perhaps the questions would bring back some of the things she had missed. But no one seemed to have anything to ask. The relaxation of the hearty and prolonged applause had given way to the sort of silence that falls in a room after vociferous greetings, when the anticipated occasion vanishes and the gathered friends become suddenly unrecognizably small and dense. She looked at the woman at her side and caught a swift responsive glance that shocked her, clear blue and white and remote in limpid freshness though it was, with its chill understanding familiarity. Something had gone irrevocably from the evening and from herself. The strange woman was exactly like somebody . . . a disguise of somebody. Shattering the silence came a voice from the back of the hall. "If the lecturer *thinks*, and seems to deprecate the fact, that theology deals with metaphysical problems in an *unmetaphysical* way, that is, from the point of view of metaphysic, in an *unscientific* way . . ." compared to Dr. Mc-Hibbert's his voice was like the voice of an intoxicated



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man arguing to himself in a railway carriage . . .  
“may we not *say* that when metaphysic takes upon itself to criticize the validity of *scientific* conceptions, it does so, from the point of view of *science* in an unscientific way?”

This Miriam felt, was terribly unanswerable. But the hushed platform was alive with the standing figure almost before the muffling of the last emphatic word told that the assailant had reassumed his seat.

“I think I have said,” his face beaming with the repressed radiance of an invading smile, was lifted towards the audience, but the blue eyes modestly addressed the frill of green along the platform edge, “that metaphysic, with respect to some of the conceptions of science, while admitting that they have their uses for practical purposes, denies that they are exactly true. Theology does not deny the problems of metaphysic, but answers them in a way metaphysic cannot accept.”

“In that case *Theology*,” began a rich, reverberating clerical voice . . .

“This is veggy boring,” said the woman.

He was going to claim, thought Miriam, noting the evidence of foreign intelligence in her neighbour’s pronunciation, that religion, like metaphysic and science, had a right to its premises and denied that metaphysic was adequate for the study of the ultimate nature of reality, exactly as metaphysic denied that science was adequate.

“Yes, isn’t it,” she murmured, a little late, through the deep caressing thunder of the clerical voice, wondering how far she had admitted her willingness to be at the disposal of any one who found, in these

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tremendous onslaughts, nothing but irrelevance.

“If one could peacefully fall asleep until the summing up.”

She spoke out quite clearly, moving so that she was half turned towards Miriam, and completely exposed to her, as she sat with an elbow on the back of her chair and her knees comfortably crossed, in all her slender grey-clad length, still set towards the centre of the platform. Miriam unwillingly searched her curious effect of making in the atmosphere about her, a cold, delicate, blue and white glare. She had seemed, all the evening, a well-dressed presence. But her little oval hat, entirely covered with a much washed piece of cream coloured lace and set back from her forehead at the angle of an old-fashioned flat lace cap, had not been bought at a shop, and the light grey garment so delicate in tone and expression, open at the neck, where creamy lace continued the effect of the hat, was nothing but a cheap rain-cloak. Either she was poor, and triumphing over her poverty with a laborious depressing ingenuity, or she was one of those people who deliberately do everything cheaply. There was something faintly horrible, Miriam felt, about the narrowness of her escape from 'dowdiness to distinction. . . . Washable lace was the simplest possible solution of the London hat problem. No untravelled Englishwoman would have thought of it. . . . Behind the serenity of her smooth white brow, behind her cold wide clearly ringed sea-blue eyes, was the dominant intelligence of it all, the secret of the strange atmosphere, that enveloped her whole effect; so strong and secure that it infected her words and movements with a faint robust delicate

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levity. In most women the sum of the tangible items would have produced the eye-wearying, eye-estranging pathos of the spectacle of patience fighting a lost battle, supplied so numerously all over London by women who were no longer young; or at least a consciously resigned cheerfulness. But she sat there with the enviable cool clear radiant eyes of a child that is held still and unsmiling by the deep entrancement of its mirth.

The chairman had risen and suddenly quelled the vast voice in the midst of its rising tide of tone, with the reminder that there would be opportunity for discussion a little later. A question rang out, short and sharp, exploding, as if released automatically by the renewal of stillness, so abruptly that Miriam missed its significance. The woman laughed instantly, a little clear tinkling gleeful sound, hesitatingly supported here and there amongst the forward rows of chairs by stirrings and small sounds of amusement. Miriam glowed with shame. It had been a common voice; perhaps some lonely un-instructed man, struggling with problems that were as terrible to him as to any one; in the end desperately getting round them, by logical somersaults, so funny, that these habitually cultured minds could see only the absurdity. Her heart beat with gratitude as the lecturer, with gentle respectful gravity, paraphrased at some length an extract from the earlier part of his address. She was once more recalled by the voice at her side. Turning she found the unchanged face still set towards the platform. She answered the question in a low toneless voice that yet sounded more disturbing than the easy smooth conversational

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tone of her neighbour. She talked on, questioning and commenting, in neat inclusive phrases, and Miriam, turned towards her, reading the history of the duel of audience and lecturer in the flickerings across her face, of amusement or of scorn, responded freely, delighting in a converse that was more wonderful, with its background of cosmic discussion, than even the untrammelled exchange of confidences with a stranger on a bus. Presently there was a complete stillness.

"If there are no more questions," said the chairman, rising.

"I should just *like*," broke in a ringing cheerful voice quite near at hand, "to ask Dr. McHibbert *why*, if he considers that metaphysic is of no use in a man's life, he finds it worth *while*, to *pursue* such a fruitless study?"

"*Don't answer*," said the woman in clear penetrating tones.

"*Don't answer; don't answer*," repeated in the immediate neighbourhood two or three masculine voices. The lecturer, sitting bent forward, his friendly open brow yielded up to the invading audience, his big hands clasped capaciously between his knees, sent a blue glance swiftly in her direction, hesitated a moment, and then sat silent, smiling broadly down at his clasped hands.

"Isn't he a perfect *darling*," murmured Miriam while the chairman declared the lecture open for discussion and she gathered herself together for close attention.

"There will be nothing worth heahghing till he sums up," said her companion and went on to ask

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her if she meant to attend the next lecture. Miriam perceived that unless she chose to escape forcibly, her companion had her in a close net of conversation. She glanced and saw that her face was already that of a familiar associate, no longer spurring her to trace to its source the strange impression that at first it had given her of being a forgotten face, whose sudden return, unrecognizably disguised, and yet so recognizable, filled her with a remembered sentiment of dislike.

"Rather," she said and then, watching the opening prospect of the long series of speeches, and protected by the monotonous booming of a pessimistic male voice, "I'm so awfully relieved to find that science is only half true. But I *can't* see why he says that metaphysic is no practical use. It would make *all* the difference every moment, to know for certain that mind is more than matter."

"Pahghfaitement."

Dr. McHibbert's voice interrupted her, damming up the urgent flow of communications. She watched him, listening without attention.

"He's like a marvellously intelligent bolster," she said tonelessly, "but with a heart and a soul. He certainly has a soul."

Flattered by a soft chuckle of amusement, she added in a low murmuring man's voice, "the objectors are like candle-lit turnip ghosts," and was rewarded by the first direct glance from the blue eyes, smiling, assuring her that she was acceptable. The ghost of the remembered face was laid. Whoever it was, if in reality it were to reappear in her life, she would be able to overcome her aversion by bold flirtation.

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When the lecturer at last rose to reply, the guiding phrases of his discourse were the worn familiar keys of a past experience. Used for the second time at the doors of the chambers they had opened within the background of life, they grated, hesitating, and the heavy sound threw the bright spaces into shadow and spread a film of doubt over Miriam's eagerness to escape and share her illumination with people waiting outside in the surrounding gloom. The light would return and remain for her. But it was something accomplished unaccountably. The mere reproduction of the magic phrases, even when after solitary peaceful contemplation she should have reassembled them in their right relations and their marvellously advancing sequence, would not carry her hearers along the road she had travelled. The something that held them together, lively and enlivening, was incommunicable.

"Don't huggy away. The audience will take a considerable time to disperse."

Miriam desired only to escape into the night. Just outside, in the darkness, was the balm that would disperse her disquietude. The grey-clad woman held it suspended in the hot room, piling mountainously up. But they sat enclosed, a closely locked party of two. Conversation was going on all over the room. This woman with her little deprecating frown at the idea of immediate departure, had the secret of the congregational aspect of audiences. Miriam sat still, passively surrendering to the forcible initiation into the new rôle of lingerer, to the extent of floundering through absent-minded responses.

"What?" she said suddenly, turning full round.



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Something had thrilled upon the air about her, bringing the whole evening to a head.

"Haldane's Pathway to Reality," repeated the woman as their eyes met. Miriam was held by the intense radiance of the blue eyes. Light, strangely cool and pure, flowed from the still face. She was beautiful, with a curious impersonal glowless beauty. The light that came from her was the light of something she saw, habitually.

"But I ought not to recommend you to read. You ought to spend all your free time in the open air. Moreover, it's very stiff reading."

Miriam rose, beleaguered and flinching. How did people find out about books? Where did they get them from? This woman could not afford to buy big expensive volumes. . . . Why did her quick mind assume that the difficulty of the book would be a barrier, and not see that it was the one book she was waiting for, even if it were the stiffest and driest in the world? . . . But the title was unforgettable; one day she would come across the book somewhere and get at its meaning in her own way.

"Well; we may meet next week, if we are both early; I shall be early." She rose enlivening her grey cloak with the swift grace of her movements and together they proceeded down the rapidly emptying room.

"My name is Lucie Duclaux."

The shock of this unexpected advance arrested Miriam's rapid flight towards the harbour of solitude. She smiled a formal acknowledgment, unable and entirely unwilling to identify herself with a name. Her companion, remaining close in her

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neighbourhood as they threaded their way amongst talking groups along the corridor, said nothing more, and when they reached the doorway Miriam's determination to be free, kept her blind and dumb. She was aware of an exclamation about the rain. That was enough. She would not risk a parting intimate enough to suggest another meeting, with any one who at the sight of rain, belaboured the air and the people about her, with an exclamation that was, however gracious and elegant, a deliberate assault, condemning her moreover of the possession of two voices. . . . Gathering up her Lucie Duclaux cloak, the woman bowed swiftly and disappeared into the night.

The girls had understood that the evening had been a vital experience. But they had sat far away, seeming to be more than ever enclosed in their attitude of tolerant amusement at her doings; more than ever supporting each other in a manner that told, with regard to herself, of some final unanimous conclusion reached and decision taken, after much discussion, once for all. In the old days they would have thought nothing of her dropping in at eleven o'clock at night, with no reason but that of just dropping in. But now, their armoury of detached expectancy demanded always that she should supply some pretext. Tonight, feeling that the pretext was theirs, every one's, news too pressing to wait, she had rushed in unprepared, with something of her old certainty of welcome. It was so simple. It *must* be important to Jan that what Hegel meant was only just beginning to be understood. If Jan's acceptance of Haeckel made her sad, here was what

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she wanted; even though McHibbert said that we have no right to believe a theory because we could not be happy unless it were true. . . . All the same a theory that makes you miserable can't be altogether true. . . . Miserable; not sorry. Everything depends upon the kind of man who sets up the theory . . . Pessimists can find as good reasons as optimists . . . but if the optimist is cheerful because he is healthy and the pessimist gloomy because . . . everything is a matter of temperament. Neither of them see that the fact of there being anything anywhere is more wonderful than any theory about the fact . . . making optimists and pessimists look exactly alike . . . then why was philosophy so fascinating?

"You will lose your colour, my child, and get protuberances on your brow."

"What then?"

St. Pancras clock struck midnight as she reached home. The house was in darkness. She went noiselessly up the first two flights and forward, welcomed, towards the blue glimmer of street lamps showing through the open drawing-room door. It was long since she had seen the room empty. His absence had restored it to her in its old shadowy character; deep black shadows, and spaces of faint blue light that came in through the lace curtains, painting their patterned mesh on the sheen of the opposite walls. The old familiar presence was there in the hush of the night, dissolving the echoes of the day and promising, if she stayed long enough within it, the emergence of tomorrow, a picture, with long perspectives, seen suddenly in the distance, alone upon a bare wall. She stood still, moving rapidly into the

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neutral zone between the two days, further and further into the spaces of the darkness, until everything disappeared, and all days were far-off strident irrelevances, for ever unable to come between her and the sound of the stillness and its touch, a cool breath, passing through her unimpeded.

She could not remember whether she had first seen him rise or heard the deep tones coming out of the velvety darkness.

"No, you did not startle me. I've been to a lecture," she said sinking in a sleep-like stupor into a chair drawn up beyond the light of the window, opposite his own, across which there struck a shaft of light falling, now that he was again seated, only on his face. Miriam gazed at him from within the sheltering darkness, fumbling sleepily for the way back to some lucid recovery of the event of her evening.

"Ah. It is a pity I could not be there." His words broke into the stillness, an immensity of communication, thrown forward through their unrestricted sitting, in the darkness, where, to bridge, before tomorrow, the gap made by his evening's absence, he had waited for her. She sat silent, her days once more wound closely about her, an endless hospitable chain.

"Tell me of this lecture."

"Philosophy."

"Tsa. It is *indeed* a pity."

"It is a series" . . . are you sitting there already involved in engagements . . . cut off; changed . . .

"Excellent. I shall most certainly come." He was looking freely ahead. His evening had not in-

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terested him . . . he had gone and come back, his horizons unenlarged . . . but not seeing the impression he had made on those people; the steps they would take.

"It would be splendid for you. The lecturer's English *wonderful*. The way the close thought made his sentences, fascinated me so much, that I often missed the meaning in listening to the rhythm; like a fugue." Aren't you *glad* you've enlarged your horizons? Don't you know what people are . . . what you, a person, are to people? Are you a person? In a blankness, life streamed up in spirals, vanishing, leaving nothing . . .

"That is not bad. Ah I should not have paid this visit. It was also in some respects most painful to me." Poor little man, poor little lonely man white-faced and sensitive, in a world without individuals; grown and formed and wise without realizing an individual; never to realize. Audible within the darkness was a singing, hovering on spaces of warm rosy light.

"You must not regret your visit."

"Regret no; it was much as I anticipated. But it is disheartening, this actual witnessing." They were disposed of in some way; in one piece; he would have a formula.

"What are they like?"

"Quite as I expected; good simple people, kind and hospitable. I have been the whole evening there. Ah but it is sad for me this first meeting with English Jews."

"Perhaps you can make Zionists of them."

"That is absolutely impossible."

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"Did you talk to them about Zionism?"

"It is useless to talk to these people whose first pride is that they are *English*."

"But they are *not*."

"You should tell them so. They will tell you they are English, of the Jewish persuasion. Ah it has revolted me to hear them talk of this war, the British Empire, and the subject races."

"I know; disgusting; but very English. But the British Empire has done a good deal for the Jews and I suppose the Jews feel loyal."

"That is true. But what they do not see is that they are not, and never can be, English; that the English do not accept them as such."

"That's true I know; the general attitude; but there are no disabilities. The Jews are free in England."

"They are free; to the honour of England in all history. But they are nevertheless Jews and not Englishmen. Those Jews who deny, or try to ignore this, have ceased to be Jews without becoming Englishmen. The toleration for Jews, moreover, will last only so long as the Englishmen remain in ignorance of the immense and increasing power and influence of the Jew in this country. Once that is generally recognized, even England will have its anti-semitic movement."

"*Never*. England can assimilate anything. Look at the races that have been built into us in the past."

"No nation can assimilate the Jew."

"What about inter-marriages?"

"That is the minority."

"If it was right to make a refuge for the Jews



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here it is still right and England will never regret it."

"Believe me it is not so simple. Remember that British Jewry is perpetually and increasingly reinforced by immigration from those countries where Jews are segregated and ever more terribly persecuted. At present there is England, both for the Jewish speculator and the refugee pauper. But for those who look at *facts*, the end of this possibility is in sight. The time for the closing of this last door is approaching."

"I don't believe England will ever do it. How can they? Where will the Jews go? It's impossible to think of. It will be the end of England if we begin that sort of thing."

"It may be the beginning of Jewish nationality. Ah at least this visit has reawakened all the Zionist in me."

"It is a glorious idea." His evening *had* been eventful; sending him back to the freshness of the days at Basel. It was then, she thought, at the moment he was bathed in the unceasing beauty of the surroundings, and immersed within it, in inextinguishable association with the students of the photographs, poised blissfully irresponsible in a permanent boundless beguilement, himself the most untouched of all, the most smoothly rounded, and elastically surrendered with his deep-singing, child-like confident face, that he had been touched and shaped and sent forth; his future set towards a single separate thing, the narrowest, strangest, most unknown of movements, far away from the wide European life that had flowed through his mind.

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"It is a dream, far-off. In England hardly even that." There was a blankness before him. Unconscious of his youth, and his radiating charm, distilled from the modern world; Frenchman, Russian, philosophical German-brained, he sat there white-faced, an old old Jew, immeasurably old, cut off, alone with his conviction, facing the blank spaces of the future. Why could he not be content to be a European? She swayed, dragging at the knot. In his deeply saturated intelligence there still was a balance on the side from which he had declared to his father, that he was first a man; then a Jew. By the accidents of living, this might be cherished. The voices of the night cried out against the treachery. She glanced remorsefully across at him and recognized with a sharp pang of pity, in his own eyes, the well-known eyes wide open towards the darkness where she sat invisible, the look he had described . . . wehmütig; in spite of his sheltered happy prosperous youth it was there; he *belonged* to those millions whose sufferings he had revealed to her, a shadow lying for ever across the bright unseeing confidence of Europe, hopeless. And now, at this moment, standing out from their midst the strange beautiful Old Testament figure in modern clothes; the fine beautifully moulded Hebrew head, so like his own. . . .

"But it *is* extraordinary; that just when everything is at its worst, this idea should have arisen. . . . It's all very well for people to laugh at Micawber."

"Who is this man?"

"The man who is always waiting for something to turn up. Things *do* turn up, exactly at the right

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moment. It doesn't mean fatalism. I don't believe in *laissez-aller* as a principle; but there is something *in* things, something the people who make plans and think they are thinking out everything in advance, don't know; their oblivion of it, while they go busily on knowing exactly what they are going to do and why, even at picnics, is a terrible thing. And somehow they always fail."

"They do not by any means always fail. In all concerted action there must be a plan. Herzl is certainly a man with a plan."

"Yes but it's different; his idea *is* his plan. It isn't *clever*. And now that it is here it seems so simple. Why was it never put forward before?"

"The greatest ideas are always simple; though not in their resultants. This dream however, has always been present with Jews."

"Of course. The Zionist Movement, coming now, when it is most wanted, is not altogether Herzl. It's that strange thing, the thing that makes you stare, in history. A sort of shape . . ."

"It is the collective pressure of life; an unseen movement. But if you feel this what now becomes of your individualism? Eh?" He chuckled his delight . . . passing so easily and leisurely to personal things.

"Oh the shape doesn't affect the *individual*, in himself. There's something behind all those outside things that goes on independently of them, something much more wonderful."

"You are wrong. What you call the shape, affects most profoundly every individual in spite of himself."

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"But he must be an individual to be affected at all, and no two people are affected in the same way . . . after this evening I'm more of an individualist than before. It is *relief* to know that science is a smaller kind of truth than philosophy. The real difficulty is not between science and religion at all, but between religion and *philosophy*. Philosophy seems to think science assumes too much to begin with and can never get any further than usefulness."

"Science can afford to smile at this."

"And that religion is philosophically unsound, though modern religious controversy is metaphysical."

"*All* controversy depends from differences in estimation of term of significations."

"That's why arguments are so maddening; even small discussions; people go rushing on, getting angrier and angrier, talking about quite different things, especially men, because they never want to get at the truth, only to score a point."

"You are unjust; many men put truth before any other consideration whatsoever. It is not only unjust, it is most bad for you to hold this cynical estimation."

"Well, men arguing always look like that to women. That's why women always go off at a tangent; because they reply not to what men *say* but to what they *mean*, which is to *score a point*, which *anybody* can do, with practice, and while they hold on to the point they mean to score, they are revealed, under all sorts of circumstances, all sorts of things about them are as plain as a pike-staff, to a woman, and the results of these things; so that she suddenly finds herself saying something that sounds quite irrelevant, but isn't."

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"Nevertheless there is honourable controversy, and most fruitful."

"There are people here and there with open minds. Very few."

"The point is not the few, but that they *are*."

"The few just men, who save the city."

"Exactly."

"But even existence is not quite certain."

"*What* is this?"

"Descartes *said*, my existence is certain; that is a fallacy."

"If this is a fallacy for metaphysic, so much the worse for metaphysic."

"That is argumentum ad hominem."

"I am not afraid of it."

"But what can you put in place of metaphysic?"

"Life is larger."

"I know. I know. I know. Something exists. Metaphysic admits that. I nearly shouted when Dr. McHibbert said that. It's enough. It answers everything. Even to have seen it for a moment is enough. The first time I thought of it I nearly died of joy. Descartes should have said, 'I am aware that there *is* something, therefore I am.' If I am other people are; but that does not seem to matter. That is their own affair."

"Beware of solipsism."

"I don't care what it is called. It is certainty. You *must* begin with the individual. There we are again." There was an end to the conversation that could not be shared. The words of it already formed, intangibly, waited, ready to disappear, until she should be alone and could read them on a clear

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background. If she stayed they would disappear irrevocably. She rose, bidding him a hurried good-night, suddenly aware of the busily sleeping household, friendly guardian of this wide leisurely night-life. He too was aware and grateful, picking his way cautiously through the shadows of the large room, sheltered from his loneliness, invisibly enclosed by the waiting incommunicable statement that yet left him, accusing him of wilful blindness, so cruelly outside.

“Materialism,” scribbled Miriam eagerly, “has the recommendation of being a Monism, and therefore a more perfect explanation of the universe than a Dualism can be. . . . And Matter forms one great whole, persisting through many ages. Mind appears in the form of separate individuals, isolated from each other by Matter, and each ceasing, so far as observation goes, after a very few years. Also the changes which we can observe Mind to make in Matter are comparatively insignificant, while a very slight change in Matter will either destroy Mind, or, at least, remove it from the only circumstances in which we can observe its existence. All these characteristics make Matter appear much more powerful and important than Mind.”

“I consider this a very strong reasoning,” muttered Mr. Shatov.

“Ssh. Wait.” He was sitting intent, with an awakened youthful student’s face, meeting, through her agency, in England, a first-class intelligence. He would hear the beautiful building up, strophe and antistrophe, of the apparently unassailable argument, the pause, and then, in the same shapely cadences,



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its complete destruction, for ever, the pleasant face smiling at the audience above the ruins, like a child who has just shattered a castle of bricks.

“Idealism was weakened by being supposed to be bound up with certain theological doctrines which became discredited. All these things account for the great strength of materialism some years ago. There has been a reaction against this, but the extent of the reaction has been exaggerated.”

“Quite so.”

“Wait, wait.”

“It still remains the belief to which most people tend on first leaving an unreflecting position. And many remain there. Science is a large element in our lives now, and if we try to make science serve as metaphysic, we get materialism. Nor is it to be wished—even by idealists—that materialism should become too weak. For idealism is seldom really vigorous except in those who have had a serious struggle with materialism. . . . It would be very difficult to disprove materialism, if we once accepted the reality of matter as a thing in itself. But, as we saw when considering dualism, such a reality of matter is untenable. And this conclusion is obviously more fatal to materialism than it was to dualism. And again, if materialism is true, all our thoughts are produced by purely material antecedents. These are quite blind, and are just as likely to produce falsehood as truth. We have thus no reason for believing any of our conclusions—including the truth of materialism, which is therefore a self-contradictory hypothesis.”

“I find this too easily stated.”

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Then God is *proved* . . .

"You weren't here *before*. Philosophy is not difficult. It is common sense systematized and clarified." . . . wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. It is not what people think but what they know. Thought is words. Philosophy will never find words to express life; the philosopher is the same as the criminal?

"He seems to say spirit when he means *life*."

"What *is* life?"

"Moreover presentationism is incompatible with the truth of general propositions—and therefore with itself, since it can only be expressed by a general proposition. And closer analysis shows that it is incompatible even with particular propositions, since these involve both the union of two terms and the use of general ideas." People know this faintly when they say things; not *why*; but faintly every one knows that nothing can be said. Then why listen any more? Because if you know, exactly, that nothing can be said and the expert reasons for it, you know for certain in times of weakness, how much there is that might be expressed if there were any way of expressing it. . . . But there was no need to listen any more since God was proved by the impossibility of his absence, like an invisible star. No one seemed at all disturbed; the lecturer least of all. Perhaps he felt that the effects of real realization would be so tremendous that he could not face them. The thought of no God made life simply silly. The thought of God made it embarrassing. If a hand suddenly appeared writing on the wall, what would he do? He would blush; standing there as a com-

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petitor, fighting for his theories, amongst the theories of other men. Yet if there were no philosophers, if the world were imagined without philosophy, there would be nothing but theology, getting more and more superstitious.

Everybody was so *calm*. The calmness of insanity. Nobody quite all there. Yet intelligent. *What* were they all thinking about, wreathed in films of intelligent insanity; watching the performance in the intervals of lives filled with words that meant nothing . . . breath was more than words; the fact of breathing . . . but every one was in such a hurry.

"I would ask" . . . one horrified glance revealed his profile quivering as he hesitated. A louder, confident, dictatorial English voice had rung out simultaneously from the other side of the hall. He would have to sit down, shaken by his brave attempt. But to the whole evening, the deep gentle tones had been added, welling through and beyond the Englishman's strident, neat proclamation, and containing, surely every one must hear it, so much of the answer to the essential question. The chairman hesitated, turned decisively and the other man sat down.

"What the lecturer makes of the psycho-physical parallelism?"

He drove home his question on a note of reproachful expostulation and sat down drawn together, with bent head and eye downcast, but listening intently with his serenely singing child's brow. Miriam was instantly sorry that his words had got through, their naked definiteness changing the eloquent tone, sharpening it to a weapon, a borrowed weapon.

"That's it," she breathed, hoping the lecturer's

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answer would throw some light on the meaning of the fascinating phrase, floating before her, fresh from far-off philosophical battle-fields, bright from centuries of contemplation, flashing out now, today, in Europe triumphantly, in desperate encounters. The lecturer was on his feet, gleaming towards their centre of the audience his recognition of the clean thrust.

"The correlation between physical and mental gives an empirical support to materialism." That *couldn't* be spirited away. The scientists *swore* there was no break; so convincingly; perhaps they would yet win and prove it. "But it is necessary to distinguish between metaphysic and psychology. Psychology, like physical science, is to be put to the score of our knowledge of matter."

"In which he doesn't believe," scoffed Miriam, distractedly poised between Mr. Shatov's drama and the prospect opening within her mind.

"I find this a most arbitrary statement."

"Yes, *rather*," murmured Miriam emphatically, and waited for a moment as if travelling with him along his line of thought. But he was recovering, had recovered, did not seem to be dwelling or moving in any relation to what he had said, appeared to be disinterestedly listening to the next question.

"Besides," she said, "the empirical method is a most important method, and jolly" . . .

"Poor chap; what a stupidity is this question." Miriam smiled solicitously, but she had travelled back enraptured across nine years to the day, now only yesterday, of her first meeting with her newly recovered word. Jevons. From the first the sienna brown volume had been wonderful, the only one of the English books that had any connection with

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life; and that day, Sunday afternoon prep in the dining-room, with the laburnum and pink may outside the window changing as she read from a tantalizing reproach to a vivid encirclement of her being by all the spring scenes she had lived through, coming and going, the sight and scent and shimmering movement of them, as if she moved, bodiless and expanded, about in their midst. Something about the singing, lifting word appearing suddenly on the page, even before she had grasped its meaning, intensified the relation to life of the little hard motionless book, leaving it, when she had read on, centred round the one statement; the rest remaining in shadow, interesting but in some strange way ill-gotten.

The recovery of the forgotten word at the centre of "the philosophical problems of the present day" cast a fresh glow of reality across her school-days. The efforts she had so blindly made, so indolently and prodigally sacrificing her chances of success in the last examination, to the few things that had made the world shine about her, had been in some way right, with a shapeliness and fruitfulness of their own. Her struggles with Jevons had been bread cast upon the waters . . . how differently the word now fell into her mind, with "intuition" happily at home there to keep it company. If materialism could be supported empirically, there was something in it, something in matter that had not yet been found out. . . . Meantime philosophy proved God. And Hegel had not brushed away the landscape. There was God *and* the landscape.

"Materialism isn't dead *yet*," she heard herself say recklessly.

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“More. Chemistry will yet carry us further than this kind of metaphysical surmising.”

Taking part, even being with some one who took part in the proceedings, altered them. Some hidden chain of evidence was broken. Things no longer stood quietly in the air for acceptance or rejection. The memory of the evening would be a memory of social life, isolated revelations of personality.



## CHAPTER VIII

WHEN they emerged from the dusty shabbiness of the Euston Road it was suddenly a perfect June morning. Now was the moment. She opened the letter unnoticed, with her eyes on the sunlit park-lined vista. . . . "London owes much to the fact that its main thoroughfares run east and west; walk westward in the morning down any one of them, or in the afternoon towards the east and whenever the sun shines you will see" . . . and without arousing his attention hurriedly read the few lines. Was that man still in London, trying to explain it to himself, or had he been obliged to go away, or perhaps to die? London is heaven and can't be explained. To be sent away is to be sent out of heaven.

"I've been telling," useless words, coming thin and helpless out of darkness and pressing against darkness . . . a desperate clutching at a borrowed performance to keep alive and keep on . . . "my employers what I think of them just lately."

"Excellent. What have you told?"

His unconscious voice steadied her; as the darkness drove nearer bringing thoughts that must not arrive. The morning changed to a painted scene, from which she turned away, catching the glance of the leaves near-by, trickily painted, as she turned to steer the eloquence flowing up in her mind.

"Well, it was a whole point of view I saw suddenly

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in the train coming back after Easter. I read an essay, about a superannuated clerk, an extraordinary thing, very simple and well written, not in the least like an essay. But there was something in it that was horrible. The employers gave the old man a pension, with humorous benevolence. He is so surprised and so blissfully happy in having nothing to do but look at the green world for the rest of the time, that he feels nothing but gratitude. That's all right, from his point of view, being that sort of old man. But how dare the firm be humorously benevolent? It is no case for *humour*. It is *not* funny that prosperous people can use up lives on small fixed salaries that never increase beyond a certain point no matter how well the employers get on, even if for the last few years they give pensions. And they don't give pensions. If they do, they are thought most benevolent. The author, who is evidently in a way a thoughtful man, ought to have known this. He just wrote a thing that looks charming on the surface and is beautifully written and is really perfectly horrible and disgusting. Well, I suddenly thought employers ought to know. I don't know what can be done. *I* don't want a pension. I hate working for a salary as it is. But employers ought to *know* how fearfully unfair everything is. They ought to have their complacency smashed up." He was engrossed. His foreign intelligence sympathized. Then she was right.

"Anyhow. The worst of it is that my employers are so frightfully nice. But the principle's the same, the frightful unfairness. And it happened that just before I went away, just as Mr. Hancock

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was going off for his holiday, he had been annoyed by one of his Mudie books going back before he had read it, and no others coming that were on his list, and he suddenly said to me in a grumbling tone 'you might keep an eye on my Mudie books.' I was simply furious. Because before I began looking after the books—which he had never asked me to do, and was quite my own idea—it was simply a muddle. They all kept lists in a way, at least put down books when they hit upon one they thought they would like, and then sent the whole list *in*, and never kept a copy, and of course forgot what they'd put down. Well, I privately took to copying those lists and crossing off the books as they came and keeping on sending in the rest of the list again and again till they had *all* come. Well, I know a wise person would not have been in a rage and would meekly have rushed about keeping more of an eye than ever. But I can't stand unfairness. It was the principle of the thing. What made it worse was that for some time I have had the use of one of his books myself, his idea, and of course most kind. But it doesn't alter the principle. In the train I saw the whole unfairness of the life of employees. However hard they work, their lives don't alter or get any easier. They live cheap poor lives in anxiety all their best years and then are expected to be grateful for a pension, and generally get no pension. I've left off living in anxiety; perhaps because I've forgotten how to have an imagination. But that is the principle and I came to the conclusion that no employers, however generous and nice, are entitled to the slightest special consideration. And I came back and practically

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said so. I told him that in future I would have nothing to do with his Mudie books. It was outside my sphere. I also said all sorts of things that came into my head in the train, a whole long speech. About unfairness. And to prove my point to him individually I told him of things that were unfair to me and their other employees in the practice; about the awfulness of having to be there first thing in the morning from the country after a week-end. *They don't.* They sail off to their expensive week-ends without even saying good-bye and without even thinking whether we can manage to have any sort of recreation at all on our salaries. I said that, and also that I objected to spend a large part of a busy Monday morning arranging the huge bunches of flowers he brought back from the country. That was not true. I loved those flowers and could always have some for my room; but it *was* a frightful nuisance sometimes, and it came into the principle, and I wound up by saying that in future I would do only the work for the practice and no odd jobs of any kind."

"What was his reply?"

"Oh well, I've got the sack."

"Are you serious?" he said in a low frightened tone. The heavens were clear, ringing with morning joy; from far away in the undisturbed future she looked back smiling upon the episode that lay before her growing and pressing.

"I'm not serious. But they are. This is a solemn, awfully nice little note from Mr. Orly; he had to write, because he's the senior partner, to inform me that he has come to the conclusion that I must seek a more congenial post. They have ab-

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olutely made up their minds. Because they know quite well I have no training for any other work, and no resources, and they would not have done this unless they were absolutely obliged."

"Then you will be obliged to leave these gentlemen?"

"Of course long before I had finished talking I was thinking about all sorts of other things; and seeing all kinds of points of view that seemed to be stated all round us by people who were looking on. I always do when I talk to Mr. Hancock. His point of view is so clear-cut and so reasonable that it reveals all the things that hold social life together, and brings the ghosts of people who have believed and suffered for these things into the room, but also all kinds of other points of view. . . . But I'm not going to leave. I can't. What else could I do? Perhaps I will a little later on, when this is all over. But I'm not going to be dismissed in solemn dignity. It's too silly. That shows you how nice they are. I know that really I must leave. Any one would say so. But that's the extraordinary thing; I don't believe in those things; solemn endings; being led by the nose by the necessities of the situation. That may be undignified. But dignity is silly; the back view. Already I can't believe all this solemnity has happened. It's simply a most fearful bother. They've managed it splendidly, waiting till Saturday morning, so that I shan't see any of them again. The Orlys will be gone away for a month when I get there today and Mr. Hancock is away for the weekend and I am offered a month's salary in lieu of notice, if I prefer it. I had forgotten all this

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machinery. They're perfectly in the right, but I'd forgotten the machinery. . . . I knew yesterday. They were all three shut up together in the den, talking in low tones, and presently came busily out, each so anxious to pass the dismissed secretary in hurried preoccupation, that they collided in the doorway, and gave everything away to me by the affable excited way they apologized to each other. If I had turned and faced them then I should have said worse things than I had said to Mr. Hancock. I *hated* them, with their resources and their serenity, complacently pleased with each other because they had decided to smash an employee who had spoken out to them."

"This was indeed a scene of remarkable significance."

"I don't know. . . . I once told Mr. Hancock that I would give notice every year, because I think it must be so horrible to dismiss anybody. But I'm not going to be sent away by machinery. In a way it is like a family suddenly going to law."

But with the passing of the park and the coming of the tall houses on either side of the road, the open June morning was quenched. It retreated to balconies, flower-filled by shocked condemning people, prosperously turned away towards the world from which she was banished. Wimpole Street, Harley Street, Cavendish Square. The names sounded in her ears the appeal they had made when she was helplessly looking for work. It was as if she were still waiting to come. . . .

Within the Saturday morning peace of the deserted house lingered the relief that had followed



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their definite decision. . . . They were all drawn together to begin again, renewed, freshly conscious of the stabilities of the practice; their enclosed co-operating relationship. . . .

She concentrated her mental gaze on their grouped personalities, sharing their long consultations, acting out in her mind with characteristic gesture and speech, the part each one had taken, confronting them one by one, in solitude, with a different version, holding on, breaking into their common-sense finalities. . . . It was all nothing; meaningless . . . like things in history that led on to events that did not belong to them because nobody went below the surface of the way things appear to be joined together but are not . . . but the words belonging to the underlying things were far away, only to be found in long silences, and sounding when they came out into conversations, irrelevant, often illogical and self-contradictory, impossible to prove, driving absurdly across life towards things that seemed impossible, but were true . . . there were two layers of truth. The truths laid bare by common-sense in swift decisive conversations, founded on apparent facts, were incomplete. They shaped the surface, made things go kaleidoscoping on, recognizable, in a sort of general busy prosperous agreement; but at every turn, with every application of the common-sense civilized decisions, enormous things were left behind, unsuspected, forced underground, but never dying, slow things with slow slow fruit . . . the surface shape was powerful, every one was in it, that was where free-will broke down, in the moving on and being spirited away for another spell from the underlying things, but in every one,

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alone, often unconsciously, was something, a real inside personality that was turned away from the surface. In front of every one, away from the bridges and catchwords, was an invisible plank, that would bear . . . always . . . forgotten . . . nearly all smiles were smiled from the bridges . . . nearly all deaths were murders or suicides. . . .

It would be such an awful labour . . . in the long interval the strength for it would disappear. Thoughts must be kept away. Activities. The week-end would be a vacuum of tense determination. That was the payment for headlong speech. Speech, thought-out speech, does nothing but destroy. There had been a moment of hesitation in the train, swamped by the illumination coming from the essay. . . .

The morning's letters lay unopened on her table. Dreadful. Dealing with them would bring unconsciousness, acceptance of the situation would leap upon her unawares. She gathered them up conversationally, summoning presences and the usual atmosphere of the working day, but was disarmed by the trembling of her hands. The letters were the last link. Merely touching them had opened the door to a withering pain. When the appointments were kept, she would no longer be in the house. The patients crowded through her mind; individuals, groups, families, the whole fabric of social life richly unrolled day by day, for her contemplation; spirited away. Each letter brought the sting of careless indifferent farewell.

At the hall door James was whistling for a hansom; it was a dream picture, part of the week that was past. A hansom drew up, the abruptly reined-in

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horse slipping and scrabbling. Perhaps there *was* a patient hidden in Mr. Leyton's quiet sounding surgery. Once more she could watch a patient's departure; the bright oblong of the street . . . he was away for the week-end. There was no patient. It was a dream picture. Dream figures were coming downstairs. . . . Mrs. Orly, Mr. Orly, not yet gone; coming hurriedly straight towards her. She rose without thought, calmly unoccupied, watching them come, one person, swiftly and gently. They stood about her, quite near; silently radiating their kindness.

"I suppose we must say good-bye," said Mrs. Orly. In her sweet little sallow face not a shadow of reproach; but lively bright sorrow, *tears* in her eyes.

"I say, we're awfully sorry about this," said Mr. Orly gustily, shifting his poised bulk from one foot to the other.

"So am I," said Miriam seeking for the things they were inviting her to say. She could only smile at them.

"It *is* a pity," whispered Mrs. Orly. *This* was the Orlys; the reality of them; an English reality; utterly unbusinesslike; with no codes but themselves; showing themselves; without disguises of voice or manner, to a dismissed employee; the quality of England; old-fashioned.

"I know." They both spoke together and then Mrs. Orly was saying, "No, Ro can't bear strangers."

"If *you* don't want me to go I shall stay," she murmured. But the sense of being already half reinstated was driven away by Mrs. Orly's unaltered distress.

"Ungrateful?" The gustily panting tones were

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the remainder of the real anger he had felt, listening to Mr. Hancock's discourse. They had no grievance and they had misunderstood his.

"No," she said coldly, "I don't think so."

"Hang it all, excuse my language, but y'know he's done a good deal for ye." 'All expectation of gratitude is meanness and is continually punished by the total insensibility of the obliged person' . . . we are lucky; we ought to be grateful"; meaning, to God. Then unlucky people ought to be ungrateful. . . .

"Besides," the same gusty tone, "it's as good as telling us we're not gentlemen; y'see?" The blue eyes flashed furiously.

Then all her generalizations had been taken *personally*. . . . "Oh well," she said helplessly.

"We shall be late, laddie."

"Surely that can be put right. I must talk to Mr. Hancock."

"Well, to tell y'honestly I don't think y'll be able to do anything with Hancock." Mrs. Orly's distressed little face supported his opinion, and her surprising sudden little embrace and Mr. Orly's wringing handshake meant not only the enduring depths of their kindness but their pained dismay in seeing her desolate and resourceless, their certainty that there was no hope. It threw a strong light. It would be difficult for him to withdraw; perhaps impossible; perhaps he had already engaged another secretary. . . . But she found that she had not watched them go away and was dealing steadily with the letters, with a blank mind upon which presently emerged the features of the coming week-end.

"Well as I say——" Miriam followed the linger-

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ing held-in cold vexation of the voice, privately prompting it with informal phrases fitting the picture she held, half-smiling, in her mind, of a moody, uncertain, door-slamming secretary, using the whole practice as material for personal musings, liable suddenly to break into long speeches of accusation. but if they were spoken, they would destroy the thing that was being given back to her, the thing that had made the atmosphere of the room. "It will be the most unbusinesslike thing I've ever done; and I doubt very much whether it will answer."

"Oh well. There's not any reason why it shouldn't." She smiled provisionally. It was not yet quite time to rise and feel life flowing about her in the familiar room, purged to a fresh austerity by the coming and passing of the storm. There was still a rankling, and glorious as it was to sit talking at leisure, the passing of time piled up the sense of ultimate things missing their opportunity of getting said. She could not, with half her mind set towards the terms, promising a laborious future, of her resolution that he should never regret his unorthodoxy, find her way to them. And the moments as they passed gleamed too brightly with confirmation of the strange blind faith she had brought as sole preparation for the encounter, hovered with too quiet a benediction to be seized and used deliberately, without the pressure of the sudden inspiration for which they seemed to wait.

"Well, as I say, that depends entirely on yourself. You must clearly understand that I expect you to fulfil all reasonable requests whether referring to the practice or no, and moreover to fulfil them *cheerfully*."

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"Well, of course I have no choice. But I can't promise to be *cheerful*; that's impossible." An obstinate tightening of the grave face.

"I think perhaps I might manage to be *serene*; generally. I can't pretend to be cheerful. 'Assume an air of cheerfulness, and presently you will be cheerful, in spite of yourself.' Awful. To live like that would be to miss suddenly finding the hidden something that would make you cheerful for ever."

"Well as I say."

"You see there's always the awful question of right and wrong mixed up with everything; all sorts of rights and wrongs, in the simplest things. I can't think how people can go on so calmly. It sometimes seems to me as if every one ought to stop and do quite other things. It's a nightmare, the way things go on. I want to stay here, and yet I often wonder whether I ought; whether I ought to go on doing this kind of work."

"Well as I say, I know quite well the work here leaves many of your capabilities unoccupied."

"It's not that. I mean everything in general."

"Well—if it is a question of right and wrong, I suppose the life here like any other, offers opportunities for the exercise of the Christian virtues."

Resignation; virtues deliberately set forth every day like the wares in a little shop; and the world going on outside just the same. A sort of sale of mean little virtues for respectability and a living; the living coming by amiable co-operation with a world where everything was wrong, turning the little virtues into absurdity; respectable absurdity. He did not



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think the practice of the Christian virtues in a vacuum was enough. But he had made a joke, and smiled his smile. . . . There was no answer anywhere in the world to the question he had raised. Did he remember saying why shouldn't you take up dentistry? Soon it would be too late to make any change; there was nothing to do now but to stay and justify things . . . it would be impossible to be running about in a surgery with grey hair; it would make the practice seem dowdy. All dental secretaries were young. . . . The work . . . nothing but the life all round it; the existence of a shadow amidst shadows unaware of their shadowiness, keeping going a world where there were things, more than people. The people moved sunlit and prosperous, but not enviable, their secrets revealed at every turn, unaware themselves, they made and left a space in which to be aware. . . .

"I want to say that I think it is kind of you to let me air my grievances so thoroughly."

"Well, as I *say*, I feel extremely uncertain as to the advisability of this step."

"You needn't," she said rising as he rose, and going buoyantly to move about in the neighbourhood of the scattered results of his last operation, the symbols of her narrowly rescued continuity. She was not yet free to touch them. He was still wandering about the other part of the room, lingering with thoughtful bent head in the mazes of her outrageous halting statements. But a good deal of his resentment had gone. It was something outside herself, something in the world at large, that had forced him to act against his "better judgment." He was still angry

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and feeling a little shorn, faced, in the very presence of the offender, with the necessity of disposing of the fact that he had been driven into inconsistency.

Miriam drew a deep sigh, clearing her personal air of the burden of conflict. Was it an affront? It had sounded to her like a song. His thoughts must be saying, well, there you are, it's all very well to throw it all off like that. His pose stiffened into a suggested animation with regard to work delayed. If only now there could be an opportunity for one of his humorous remarks so that she could laugh herself back into their indestructible impersonal relationship. It was, she thought, prophetically watching his gloriously inevitable recovery, partly his unconscious resentment of the blow she had struck at their good understanding that had made him so repeatedly declare that if they started again it must be on a new footing; that all possibility of spontaneity between them had been destroyed.

How could it be, with the events of daily life perpetually building it afresh?

## CHAPTER IX

THE power of London to obliterate personal affairs depended upon unlimited freedom to be still. The worst suffering in the days of uncertainty had been the thought of movements that would make time move. . . . Now that the stillness had returned, life was going on, dancing, flowing, looping out in all directions able to bear its periods of torment in the strength of its certainty of recovery, so long as time stayed still. Life *ceased* when time moved on. Out in the world life was ceasing all the time. All the time people were helplessly doing things that made time move; growing up, old people growing onwards, with death suddenly in sight, rushing here and there with words that had lost their meaning, dodging and crouching no matter how ridiculously, to avoid facing it. Young men died in advance; it was visible in their faces, when they took degrees and sat down to tasks that made time begin to move; never again free from its movement, always listening and looking for the stillness they had lost. . . . But why is the world which produces them so fresh and real and free, and then seizes and makes them dead old leaves whirled along by time, so different to people alone in themselves when time is not moving? People in themselves want nothing but

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reality. Why can't reality exist in the world? All the things that happen produce friction because they distract people from the reality they are unconsciously looking for. That is why there are everywhere torrents of speech. If she had not read all those old words in the train and had been silent. Silence is reality. Life ought to be lived on a basis of silence, where truth blossoms. Why isn't such an urgent thing known? Life would become like the individual; alive . . . it would show, inside and out, and people would leave off talking so much. Life does show, seen from far off, pouring down into stillness. But the contemplation of it, not caring for pain or suffering except as part of a picture, which no one who is in the picture can see, seems mean. Old women sitting in corners, suddenly making irrelevant remarks and chuckling, see; they make a stillness of reality, a mind picture that does not care, out of the rush of life. Perhaps they do not fear death. Perhaps people who don't take part don't fear death . . . the outsider sees most of the game; but that means a cynical man who does not care for anything; body and mind without soul. Lying dead at last, with reality left unnoticed on his dressing-table, along the window sill, along the edge of things outside the window. . . .

But one day in the future time would move, by itself, not through anything one did, and there would be no more life. . . . She looked up hurriedly toward the changing voice. He was no longer reading with a face that showed his thoughts wandering far away.

"The thought of death is, throughout life, entirely

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absent from the mind of the healthy man." His brilliant thought filled eyes shone towards her at the end of the sentence.

"There is *indeed* a vulgarity in perfect health," he exclaimed.

"Yes," she said hurriedly, carrying off the statement for examination, as peacefully he went on reading. What did vulgarity mean, or perfect health? Nobody knew. Dante ennobled the vulgar tongue. . . . People went on for ever writing books using the same words with different meanings. Her eyes returned to the relaxed unconscious form. He thought too much of books. Yet it did not appal him to think of giving up his free intellectual life and taking to work. "I shall still be an interested amateur". . . . He would go on reading, all his life, sitting as he was sitting now, grave and beautiful; with a mind outspread in a mental experience so wide that he was indifferent to the usual ideas of freedom and advantage. Yet he did not seem to be aware how much the sitting like this, linked to the world by its deep echo in the book, was a realization of life as he saw it. It did not occur to him that this serenity, in which was accumulated all the hours they had passed together, *was* realization, the life of the world in miniature, making a space where everything in human experience could emerge like a reflection in deep water, with its proportions held true and right by the tranquil opposition of their separate minds. She summoned onlookers, who instantly recognized themselves in this picture of leisure. It was in every life that was not astray in ceaseless movement. It was the place where everything was atoned. He fitted placed thus,

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happy, without problems or envies, in possession of himself and his memories in the room where he had voiced them, into the centre of English life where all turned to good, in the last fastness of the private English mind, where condemnation could not live. He reinforced it with a consciousness that was not in the English, making it show as an idea, revealing in plain terms their failure to act it out. . . . Thus would his leisure always be. But it was no part of her life. In this tranquillity there was no security . . . we will always sit like this; we must, she said within herself impatiently towards his unconsciousness. Why did he not *perceive* the life there was, the mode of life, in this sitting tranquilly together? Was he thinking of nothing but his reading? She listened for a moment half carried into the quality of the text. There was reality there, Spinoza, by himself, sounding as if the words were being traced out now, for the first time. One day in a moment of blankness, she would read it and agree and disagree and carry away some idea and lose and recover it and go on, losing and recovering, agreeing and disagreeing. . . .

When he went away her life would be swept clear of intelligently selected books and the sting of conflict with them . . . that would not matter; perhaps; books would come, somehow, in the unexpected way they always did. But it was impossible to face the ending of these settled tranquil elderly evenings of peaceful unity, the quiet dark-bearded form, sitting near, happily engrossed. . . .

“Well, what do you think of this?”

“I haven’t been attending. But I will read it . . . some time.”



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"Ah, it is a pity. But tell me your thoughts at least."

"Oh, I was thinking of my sisters."

"Ah. You must tell me," and again with unrelaxed interest he was listening to story after story, finding strange significances, matter for envy and deep chuckles of appreciative laughter.

## CHAPTER X

WITH a parting glance at Mr. Shatov's talked-out indolent vacuity, she plunged, still waiting in the attitude of conversation, into a breathless silence. She would make no more talk. There should be silence between them. If he broke it, well and good; in future she would take measures to curtail the hours of conversation leading, now that she was at home in possession of the Russian life and point of view, only to one or other of his set of quoted opinions, beyond which he refused to move. If not, the quality of their silence would reveal to her what lay behind their unrelaxed capacity for association. The silence grew, making more and more space about her, and still he did not speak. It was dismantling; unendurable. With every moment they both grew smaller and smaller, moving quickly towards the quenching of all their interchange. But there was no doubt now. The question was there between them, for equal contemplation. His easy indolence had fled; his usual pallor heightened, and he sat regarding her with an unhesitating personal gaze. Her determination closed about him, blocking his way, filling the room. He *must* emerge, admit. He must at least *see*, as she saw, if it were only the extent of their dependence on each other. He knew his need.

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Perhaps she fulfilled it less than she thought? Perhaps it was hers alone . . . His multiplied resources made hers humiliatingly greater. The shrine of her current consciousness stood before her; the roots of her only visible future planted for ever within it. Losing it, she would be left with her burden of being once more scattered and unhoused.

He rose, bringing her to her feet, and stood before her ready to go or stay as she should choose, heaping up before her with an air of gently ironic challenge, the burden of responsibility; silently offering her one of his borrowed summaries, some irrelevant and philosophic worldly wisdom. But it was what he felt. There was something he feared. Alone, he would not have initiated this scene. She faltered, driven back and disarmed by the shock of an overwhelming pity . . . unexpected terrible challenge from within, known to no one, to be accepted or flouted on her sole eternal responsibility. . . . In a torture of acceptance she pressed through it and returned remorseless to her place, flooded as she moved by a sudden knowing of wealth within herself now being strangely quarried.

The long moment was ending; into its void she saw the seemings of her grown life pass and disappear. His solid motionless form, near and equal in the twilight, grew faint, towered above her, immense and invisible in a swift gathering swirling darkness bringing him nearer than sight or touch. The edges of things along the margin of her sight stood for an instant sharply clear and disappeared leaving her faced only with the swirling darkness shot now with darting flame. She ceased to care what thoughts

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might be occupying him, and exulted in the marvel. Here already rewarding her insistence, was payment in royal coin. She was at last, in person, on a known highway, as others, knowing truth alive. She stared expostulation as she recognized the celebrated nature of her experience, hearing her own familiar voice as on a journey, in amazed expostulation at the absence everywhere of simple expression of the quality of the state . . . a voyage, swift and transforming, a sense of passing in the midst of this marvel of flame-lit darkness, out of the world in glad solitary confidence with wildly, calmly beating morning heart.

The encircling darkness grew still, spread wide about her; the moving flames drew together to a single glowing core. The sense of his presence returned in might. The rosy-hearted core of flame was within him, within the invisible substance of his breast. Tenderly transforming his intangible expansion to the familiar image of the man who knew her thoughts she moved to find him and marvel with him.

His voice budded gently, but with the same quality that had flung her back solid and alone into the cold gloom.

"We must consider" . . . what did he think had happened? He had kissed a foreign woman. Who did he think was hearing him? . . . "what you would do under certain circumstances." The last words came trembling, and he sat down clearly visible in the restored blue twilight; waiting with willing permanence for her words.

"I should do nothing at all, under any circumstances."

"Do not forget that I am Jew."

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Looking at him with the eyes of her friends Miriam saw the Russian, standing free, beyond Europe, from the stigma of "foreigner." Many people would think, as she had in the beginning, that he was an intellectual Frenchman, different to the usual "Frenchman"; a big-minded cosmopolitan at any rate; a proud possession. The mysterious fact of Jewishness could remain in the background . . . the hidden flaw . . . as there was always a hidden flaw in all her possessions. To her, and to her adventure, its first step now far away, an accepted misery powerless to arrest the swift rush of the transforming moments, it need make no difference.

"Perhaps it shall be better I should go away."

Where? Into the world of people, who would seem to him not different from themselves, see his marvellous surrendered charm, catch him, without knowing who or what he was. Who else could know "Mr. Shatov"?

"Do you want to go away?"

"I do not. But it must be with you to decide."

"I don't see why you should go *away*."

"Then I shall stay. And we shall see."

The summer lay ahead, unaltered; the threat of change gone from their intercourse. Tomorrow they would take up life again with a stability; years at their disposal. The need for the moment was to have him out of sight, kill the past hour and return to the idea of him, already keeping her standing, with relaxed power of attention to his little actual pitiful obstructive form, in an independent glow, an easy wealth of assurance towards life whose thronging images,

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mysteries of cities and crowds, single fixed groups of known places and inexorable people were alight and welcoming with the sense of him. She bade him a gentle good-night and reached her room, unpursued by thought, getting to bed in a trance of suspension, her own life behind, façades of life set all about her, claiming in vain for troubled attention, and sank at once into a deep sleep.

Putting on her outdoor things next morning, left in the drawing-room while she snatched her breakfast, she was immensely embarrassed to find him standing silently near. The woman facing her in the mirror as she put on her hat was the lonely Miriam Henderson, unendurably asked to behave in the special way. For he was standing eloquently silent and the hands arranging her hat trembled reassuringly. But what was she to do? How turn and face him and get back through the room and away to examine alone the surprises of being in love? Her image was disconcerting, her clothes and the act of rushing off to tiresomely engrossing work, inappropriate. It was paralysing to be *seen* by him struggling with a tie. The vivid colour that rushed to her cheeks turned her from the betraying mirror to the worse betrayal of his gaze. But it was enough for the moment, which she faced out, downcast, yet joyful in giving what belonged to his grave eyes.

"We cannot be as boy and girl," he said gently, "but we may be very happy."

Overwhelmed with the sense of inadequate youth Miriam stared at his thought. A fragment of conversation flashed into her mind. Jewish girls married



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at eighteen, or never. At twenty-one they were old maids. . . . He was waiting for some sign. Her limbs were powerless. With an immense effort she stretched forth an enormous arm and with a hand frightful in its size and clumsiness, tapped him on the shoulder. It was as if she had knocked him down, the blow she had given resounding through the world.

He bent to catch at her retreating hand with the attitude of carrying it to his lips, but she was away down the room, her breath caught by a little gurgle of unknown laughter.

He was at the end of the street in the evening, standing bright in the golden light with a rose in his hand. For a swift moment, coming down the shaded street towards the open light she denied him, and the rose. He had bought a rose from some flower-woman's basket, an appropriate act suggested by his thoughts. But his silent, most surrendered, most child-like gesture of offering, his man's eyes grave upon the rose for her, beneath uplifted child-like plaintive brows, went to her heart, and with the passing of the flower into her hand, the gold of the sunlight, the magic shifting gleam that had lain always day and night, yearlong, in tranquil moments upon every visible and imagined thing, came at last into her very hold. It *had* been love then, all along. Love *was* the secret of things.

They wandered silently, apart, along the golden-gleaming street. She listened, amidst the far-off sounds about them, to the hush of the great space in which they walked, where voices, breaking silently in from the talk of the world, spoke for her, bringing

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out, to grow and expand in the sunlight, the thoughts that lay in her heart. They had passed the park, forgetting it, and were enclosed in the dust-strewn narrowness of the Euston Road. But the dust grains were golden, and her downcast eyes saw everywhere, if she should raise them, the gleam of roses flowering on the air, and when, their way coming too soon towards its familiar end, they turned, with slow feet, down a little alley, dark with voices, the dingy house-fronts gleamed golden about her, the narrow strip of sky opened to an immensity of smiling spacious blue, and she still saw, just ahead, the gleam of flowers and heard on a breath purer than the air of the open country, the bright sound of distant water.

## CHAPTER XI

FOR many days they spent their leisure wandering in the green spaces of London, restored to Miriam with the frail dream-like wonder they had held in her years of solitude, deepened to a perpetual morning brightness. She recalled, in the hushed reconciliation of the present, while they saw and thought in unison, breaking their long silences with anecdotes, re-living together all they could remember of childhood, their long exhausting, thought-transforming controversies. And as her thoughts had been, so now, in these same green places were her memories transformed.

She watched, wondering, while elderly relatives, hated and banished, standing, forgotten like past nightmares, far away from her independent London life, but still powerful in memory to strike horror into her world, came forth anew, food as she breathlessly spoke their names and described them, for endless speculation. With her efforts to make him see and know them, they grew alive in her hands, significant and attractive as the present, irrecoverable, gone, lonely and pitiful, conquered by her own triumphant existence in a different world, free from obstructions, accompanied, understood. Between the movements of conversation from figure to figure, a thread of reflection wove itself in continuous repetition.

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Perhaps to all these people, life had once looked free and developing. Perhaps, if she went their way, she might yet share their fate. Never. She was mistress of her fate; there was endless time. The world was changed. They had never known freedom or the endlessness of the passing moment. Time for them had been nothing but the continuous pressure of fixed circumstances.

Distant parts of London, whither they wandered far through unseen streets, became richly familiar, opening, when suddenly they would realize that they were lost, on some scene, stamped as unforgettably as the magic scenes of holiday excursions. They lingered in long contemplation of all kinds of shop windows, his patient unmoved good-humour while she realized his comparative lack of tastes and preferences, and held forth at length on the difference between style and quality, and the products of the markets, his serene effrontery in taking refuge at last behind the quaintest little tales, satirical, but dreadfully true and illuminating, disarmed her impatience and sent her forward in laughter. He seemed to have an endless supply of these little tales, and told them well, without emphasis, but each one a little drama, perfectly shaped and staged. She collected and remembered and pondered them, the light they shed on unfamiliar aspects of life, playing comfortingly over the future. If Judges and Generals and Emperors and all sorts of people fixed and labelled in social life were real'y absurd, then social life, with him, might be not merely unaffrighting, but also amusing. At the same time she was affronted by his inclusion of English society

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in his satirical references. There were, she was sure, hidden and active, in all ranks in England, a greater proportion of people than in any country of his acquaintance, who stood outside his criticism.

She avoided the house, returning only when the hour justified a swift retreat from the hall to her room; escape from the dimly-lit privacy of the deserted drawing-room. Not again could she suffer his nearness, until the foreigner in him, dipped every day more deeply into the well of English feeling, should be changed. When she was alone, she moved, thoughtless, along a pathway that led backwards towards a single memory. Far away in the distance, coming always nearer, was the summer morning of her infancy, a permanent standing arrested, level with the brilliance of flower-heads motionless in the sunlit air; no movement but the hovering of bees. Beyond this memory towards which she passed every day more surely, a marvellous scene unfolded. And always with the unfolding of its wide prospects, there came a beautifying breath. The surprise of her growing comeliness was tempered by a sudden curious indifference. These new looks of hers were not her own. They brought a strange publicity. She felt, turned upon her, the welcoming approving eyes of women she had contemptuously neglected, and upon her own face the dawning reflection of their wise, so irritating smile. She recognized them, half fearfully, for they alone were the company gathered about her as she watched the opening marvel. She recognized them for lonely wanderers upon the earth. They, these women, then were the only people who *knew*. Their smile was the smile of these wide vistas, wrought and shaped,

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held back by the pity they turned towards the blind life of men; but it was *alone* in its vision of the spaces opening beyond the world of daily life.

The open scene, that seemed at once without her and within, beckoned and claimed her, extending for ever, without horizons, bringing to her contemplating eye a moving expansion of sight ahead and ahead, earth and sky left behind, across flower-spread plains whose light was purer and brighter than the light of day. Here was the path of advance. But pursuing it she must be always alone; supported in the turmoil of life that drove the haunting scene away, hidden beyond the hard visible horizon, by the remembered signs and smiles of these far-off lonely women.

. . . . .

Between them and their second week stood a promised visit to the Brooms; offering itself each time she surveyed it, under a different guise. But when, for their last evening together, he surprised her, so little did he ever seem to plan or reflect, with stall tickets for the opera she was overwhelmed by the swift regardless pressure of events. Opera, for ever outside her means and forgotten, descending thus suddenly upon her without space for preparation of mind, would seem to be wasted. Not in such unseemly haste could she approach this crowning ornament of social life. She was speechless, too, before the revelation of his private ponderings. She knew he was indifferent, even to the theatre, and that he could not afford this tremendous outlay. His recklessness was selfless; a great planning for her utmost



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recreation. In her satisfaction he was to be content. Touched to the heart she tried to express her sense of all these things, much hampered by the dismayed anticipation of failure, on the great evening, to produce any satisfying response. She knew she would dislike opera; fat people, with huge voices, screaming against an orchestra, in the pretence of expressing emotions they had never felt. But he assured her that opera was very beautiful, Faust perhaps the most beautiful and charming of all, and drew her attention to the massed voices. To this idea she clung, in the interval, for enlightenment.

But after spending all her available funds on an evening blouse and borrowing a cloak from Jan she found herself at the large theatre impressed only by the collected mass of the audience. The sense of being small and alone, accentuated by the presence of little Mr. Shatov, neatly in evening dress at her side, persisted, growing, until the curtain rose. So long as they had wandered about London and sat together in small restaurants, the world had seemed grouped about them, the vast ignored spectator of a strange romance. But in this huge enclosure, their small, unnoticed, unquestioned presences seemed challenged to account for themselves. All these unmoved people, making the shut-in air cold with their unconcern, even when they were hushed with the strange appealing music of the overture, were moving with purpose and direction because of their immense unconsciousness. Where were they going? What was it all about? What, she asked herself, with a crowning pang of desolation, as the curtain went relentlessly up, were he and she to be or do in this world? What would they become,

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committed, identified, two small desolate, helpless figures, with the crowding mass of unconscious life?

"I find something of grandeur in the sober dignity of this apartment. It is mediaeval Germany at its best."

"It is very dark."

"Wait, wait. You shall see life and sunshine, all in the most beautiful music."

The sombre scene offered the consolation, suddenly insufficient, that she had found in the past in sliding idly into novels, the restful sense of vicarious life. She had heard of a wonderful philosophy in Faust, and wondered at Mr. Shatov's claim for its charm. But there was, she felt, no space, on the stage, for philosophy. The scene would change, there was "charm" and sunshine and music ahead. This scene itself was changing as she watched. The old man talking to himself was less full of meaning than the wonderful German interior, the pointed stonework and high, stained windows, the carved chairs and rich old manuscripts. Even as he talked, the light from the night-sky, pouring down outside on a beautiful old German town, was coming in. And presently there would be daylight scenes. The real meaning of it all was scenes, each with their separate, rich, silent significance. The scenes were the story, the translation of the people the actual picture of them as they were by themselves behind all the pother. . . . She set herself, drifting in solitude away from the complications of the present, to watch Germany. The arrival of Mephistopheles was an annoying distraction suggesting pantomime. His part in the drama was obscured by Mr. Shatov's whispered eulogies of Chaliapin, "the

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only true Mephistopheles in Europe." It certainly seemed right that the devil should have "a most profound bass voice." The chanting of angels in Paradise, she suggested, could only be imagined in high clear soprano, whereat he maintained that women's voices unsupported by the voices of men were not worth imagining at all.

"Pippa passes. It is a matter of opinion."

"It is a matter of fact. These voices are without depth of foundation. What is this Pippa?"

"And yet you think that women can rise higher, and fall lower, than men."

She walked home amidst the procession of scenes, grouped and blending all about her, free of their bondage to any thread of story, bathed in music, beginning their life in her as memory, set up for ever amongst her store of realities. It *had* been a wonderful evening, opera *was* wonderful. But the whole effect was threatened, as it stood so lovely all about her in the night air, by his insistence upon a personal interpretation, surprising her in the midst of the garden scene and renewed now as they walked, by little attempts to accentuate the relationship of their linked arms. Once more she held off the threatened obliteration. But the scenes had retreated, far away beyond the darkness and light of the visible street. With sudden compunction she felt that it was she who had driven them away, driven away the wonders that were after all his gift. If she had softened towards him, they would have gone, just the same. . . . It was too soon to let them work as an influence.

Absurd, too, to try to invent life which did not come of itself. He had desisted and was away, fallen

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into his thoughtful forgetful singing, brumming out shreds of melody that brought single scenes vividly penetrating the darkness. She called him back with a busy repentance, carelessly selecting from her thronging impressions a remark that instantly seemed meaningless.

"Yes," he said heartily, "there is, absolutely, something echt, kern-gesund about these old-German things."

That was it. It had all meant, really, the same for him; and he knew what it was that made the charm; admitting it, in spite of his strange deep dislike of the Germans. Kern-Gesundheit was not a sufficient explanation. But the certainty of his having been within the charm made him real, a related part of the pageant of life, his personal engaging small attributes her own undivided share. On the doorstep, side by side with his renewed silent appeal, she turned and met, standing free, his gentle tremulous salutation.

For a moment the dark silent house blazed into light before her. She moved forward, as he opened the door, as into a brightness of light where she should stand visible to them both, in a simplicity of golden womanhood, no longer herself, but his Marguerite, yet so differently fated, so differently identified with him in his new simplicity, going forward together, his thoughts and visions as simple as her own in the life now just begun, from which their past dropped away grey and cold, the irrelevant experience of strangers.

But the hall was dark and the open dining-room door showed blank darkness. She led the way in; she could not yet part from him and lose the strange

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radiance surrounding herself. They ought to go forward now, together, from this moment, shedding a radiance. To part was to break and mar, forever, some essential irrecoverable glory. They sat side by side on the sofa by the window. The radiance in which she sat crowned, a figure visible to herself, recognizable, humble and proud and simple, back in its Christian origin, a single weak small figure, transfixed with light, dreadfully trusted with the searing, brightly gleaming dower of Christian womanhood, was surrounded by a darkness unpenetrated by the faint radiance the high street lamps must be sending through the thick lace curtains. This she thought is what people mean by the golden dream; but it is not a dream. No one who has been inside it can ever be the same again or quite get out. The world it shows is the biggest world there is. It is *outer* space where God is and Christ waits. "I am very happy, do you feel happy?" The small far-off man's voice sounded out, lost in the impenetrable darkness. Yet it was through him, through some essential quality in him that she had reached this haven and starting place, he who had brought this smiting descent of certainties which were to carry her on her voyage into the unknown darkness, and since he could not see her smile, she must speak.

"I think so," she said gently. She must, she suddenly realized, never tell him more than that. His happiness was, she now recognized, hearing his voice, different from hers. To admit and acclaim her own would be the betrayal of a secret trust. If she could dare to lay her hand upon him, he might know. But they were too separate. And if he were to

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touch her now, they would again be separated for longer than before, for always. "Good-night," she said, brushing his sleeve with the tips of her fingers, "dear, funny little man."

He followed her closely but she was soon away up the familiar stairs in the darkness, in her small close room, and trying to chide herself for her inadequate response, while within the stifling air the breath of sunlit open spaces moved about her.

But in the morning when the way to King's Cross Station was an avenue of sunlight, under a blue sky triumphant with the pealing of church bells, his sole conversation was an attempt to induce her to reproduce the epithet. The small scrap of friendliness had made him happy! No one, it seemed, had ever so addressed him. His delight was all her own. She was overcome by the revelation of her power to bless without effort. The afternoon's visit now seemed a welcome interval in the too swift succession of discoveries. In the cool noisy shelter of the station, Sunday holiday-makers were all about them. He was still charmingly preening himself, set off by the small busy crowd, his eye wandering with its familiar look, a childlike contemplation of the English spectacle. To Miriam's unwilling glance it seemed for observation a fruitless field; nothing exhibited there could challenge speculation.

On each face, so naïvely engrossed with immediate arranged circumstance, character, opinion, social conditions, all that might be expected under the small tests of small circumstances, was plainly written in monotonous reiteration. Moving and going, they could go, with all their busy eagerness, no further



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than themselves. At their destinations other similar selves awaited them, to meet and send them back, unchanged; an endless circling. Over their unchanging, unquestioned world, no mystery brooded with black or golden wings. They would circle unsurprised until for each one came the surprise of death. It was all they had. They were dreadful to contemplate because they suggested only death, unpondered death. Her eye rested for relief upon a barefooted newspaper boy running freely about with his cry, darting head down towards a shouted challenge.

"Before you go," Mr. Shatov was saying. She turned towards his suddenly changed voice, saw his pale face, grave, and working with the determination to difficult speech; saw him, while she stood listening to the few tense phrases in painful admiration of his courage, horribly transformed, by the images he evoked far away, immovable in the sunshine of his earlier days. The very trembling of his voice had attested the agonizing power of his communication. Yet behind it all, with what a calmness of his inner mind, had he told her, now, only now, when they were set in the bright amber of so many days, that he had been lost to her, for ever, long ago in his independent past. The train was drawing in. She turned away speechless.

"Miriam, Miriam," he pleaded in hurried shaken tones close at her side, "remember, I *did not know* that you would come."

"Well, I must go," she said briskly, the words sounding out to her like ghostly hammer-blows upon empty space. Never again should her voice sound. The movement of getting into the train brought a

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nerve-crisping relief. She had taken the first step into the featureless darkness where, alone, she was to wait, in a merciful silence, for ever.

"I shall meet you this evening," said his raised voice from the platform. He stood with bowed head, his eyes gravely on her unconsidering gaze, until the train moved out. She set her teeth against the slow movement of the wheels, grinding it seemed, smoke-befouled, deliberate, with awful circling relentlessness over her prostrate body, clenched together for the pang, too numb to feel it if only it would come, but left untouched.

The crushing of full realization, piling up behind her numbness, must pass over her. There was not much time. The train was carrying her steadily onward, and towards conversation with the unconscious Brooms. She tried to relax to its movement, to hold back from the entanglements of thought and regard the day as an interval outside the hurrying procession of her life. A way opened narrowly ahead, attainable by one rending effort, into a silence, within which the grey light filtering through the dingy windows on to the grime-greyled floor offered itself with a promise of reassurance. It was known to her; by its unvexed communion with her old self. One free breath of escape from the visions she was holding clutched for inspection, and herself would be given back to her. This awful journey would change to an eternity following serenely on a forgotten masquerade. She would not lose her knowing that all solitary journeys go on for ever, waiting through intervals, to renew themselves. But the effort, even if she could endure the pain of it, would be treachery until she

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had known and seen without reservations the whole meaning of the immovable fact. The agony within her must mean that somewhere behind the mere statements, if she could but get through and discover it, there must be a revelation that would set the world going again; bring back the vanquished sunlight. Meanwhile life must pause, humanity must stay hushed and waiting while she thought. A grey-shod foot appeared on her small empty patch of floor. With the fever of pain that flooded her she realized that she could go neither forward nor back. Life pinned her motionless, in pain. Her eye ran up and found the dreaming face of a girl; the soft fresh lineaments of childhood, shaped to a partial awareness by some fixed daily toil, but still, on all she saw, the gleam she did not know could disappear, did not recognize for what it was, priceless and enough. She would never recognize it. She was one of those women men wrap in lies, persisting unchanged through life, revered and yet odious in the kindly stupidity of thoughts fixed immovably on unreality, the gleam gone, she knew not why, and yet avenged by her awful unconscious production of the kind of social life to which men were tied, compelled to simulate life in her obstinate, smiling fool's . . . hell. The rest of the people in the carriage were aware, in the thick of conscious deceits; playing parts. The women, strained and defaced, all masked watchfulness, cut off from themselves, weaving romances in their efforts to get back, the men betraying their delight in their hidden opportunities of escape by the animation behind the voice and manners they assumed for the fixed calculable periods of forced association; ready

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to distract attention from themselves and their hidden treasures by public argument, if accident should bring it about, over anything and everything.

At least she saw. But what was the *use* of not being deceived? How in the vast spread of humanity expose the sham? How escape, without surrendering life itself, treacherous countenancing of the fiendish spectacle? What good would death do? What did "Eine für Viele" do? Brought home the truth to one man, who probably after the first shock, soon came to the conclusion that she had been mad.

She talked through lunch to the Brooms with such an intensity of animation that when at last the confrontation was at an end and the afternoon begun in the shelter of the dim little drawing-room, she found Grace and Florrie grouped closely about her, wrapped and eager for more. She turned, at bay, explaining in shaken unmeditated words that the afternoon must be spent by her in thinking out a frightful problem, and relapsed, averted swiftly from their sensitive faces, suddenly pale about eyes that reflected her distress, towards the open door of the little greenhouse leading miserably into the stricken garden. They remained motionless in the chairs they had drawn close to the little settee where she sat enthroned, clearly prepared so to sit in silent sympathy while she gazed at her problem in the garden. She sat tense, but with their eyes upon her she could not summon directly the items of her theme. They appeared transformed in words, a statement of the case that might be made to them, "any one's" statement of the case, beginning with "after all"; and

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leaving everything unstated. Applied to her own experience they seemed to have no meaning at all. Summaries were no good. Actual experience must be brought home to make anything worth communicating. "When he first kissed me," started her mind "those women were all about him. They have come between us for ever." She flushed towards the garden. The mere presence in her mind of such vile-ness was an outrage on the Broom atmosphere. She could not again face the girls. For some time she sat, driving from point to point in the garden the inexorable fact that she had reached a barrier she could not break down. She could, if she were alone, face the possibility of dashing her life out against it. If she were to turn back from it, she would be rent in twain, and how then, base and deformed could she find spirit to face any one at all? At last, still with her eyes on the garden, she told them, she must go and think in the open air. They cherished and indulged her in their unaltered way and she escaped, exempted from coming back to tea.

Suppose, said the innumerable voices of the road, as she wandered down it relieved and eager in the first moments of freedom, he had not told you? It was sincere and fine of him to tell. Not at all. He wanted to have an easy mind. He has only explained what it was that came between us at the first, and has been waiting ever since to be there again. . . .

"Remember; I *did not know* you would come."

Why did men not know? That was the strange thing. Why did they make their first impressions of women such as would sully everything that came after?

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That was the extraordinary thing about the average man and many men who were not average at all. Why?

The answer must be there if she could only get through to it. Some immovable answer. The wrong one perhaps, but sufficient to frame an irreversible judgment. There was an irreversible judgment at the heart of it all that would remain, even if further fuller truer reasons were reached later on. Anything that could take the life out of the sunlight was wrong. Every twist and turn of the many little side roads along which she made her way told her that. It was useless to try to run away from it. It remained, the only point of return from the wilderness of anger into which with every fresh attempt at thought she was immediately flung. The more angry she grew the further she seemed to move from the possibility of finding and somehow expressing, in words that had not sounded in her mind before, the clue to her misery.

She reached the park at tea-time. Its vistas were mercifully empty. She breathed more freely within its greenery. Hidden somewhere here, was relief for the increasing numbness of her brain and the drag of her aching heart. The widening sky understood and would presently, when she had reached the statement that lay now, just ahead, offer itself in the old way, for companionship. Wandering along a little path that wound in and out of a thicket of shrubs, she heard a subdued rumble of voices and came in a moment upon two men, bent-headed in conversation side by side on a secluded seat. They looked up at her and upon their shiny German faces, and in the



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cold rheumy blue eyes beneath their unconscious intelligent German foreheads, was the horrible leer of their talk. Looking up from it, scanning her in the spirit of the images of life they had evoked in their sequestered confidential interchange, they identified her with their vision. She turned back towards the wide empty avenues. But there was no refuge in them. Their bleak emptiness reflected the thoughtless lives of English men. Behind her the two Germans were immovably there, hemming her in. They were the answer. Sitting hidden there, in the English park, they were the whole unconscious male mind of Europe surprised unmasked. Thought out and systematized by them, openly discussed, without the cloudy reservations of Englishmen, was the whole masculine sense of womanhood. One image; perceived only with the body, separated and apart from everything else in life. Men were *mind* and *body*, separated mind and body, looking out at women, below their unconscious men's brows, variously moulded and sanctified by thought, with one unvarying eye. There was no escape from its horrible blindness, no other life in the world to live . . . the leer of a prostitute was . . . reserved . . . beautiful, suggesting a daily life lived independently amongst the impersonal marvels of existence, compared to the headlong desirous look of a man. The greed of men was something much more awful than the greed of a prostitute. She used her last strength to wrench herself away from the hopeless spectacle and wandered impatient and thoughtless in a feverish void. Far away from this barren north London, the chosen perfect stage for the last completion of a misery as wide as the world, was her

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own dream world at home in her room, her strange unflinching self, the lovely world of lovely things seen in silence and tranquillity, the coming and going of the light, the myriad indescribable things of which day and night, in solitude, were full, at every moment; the marvellous forgetfulness of sleep, followed by the smiling renewal of inexhaustible *sameness* . . . thought flashed in, stabbing her weakness with the reminder that solitude had failed and from its failure she had been saved by the companionship of a man; of whom until today she had been proud in a world lit by the glory and pride of achieved companionships. But it was an illusion, fading and failing more swiftly than the real things of solitude . . . there was no release save in madness; a suddenly descending merciful madness, blotting everything out. She imagined herself raging and raving through the park, through the world, attacking the indifferent sky at last with some final outbreking statement, something, somewhere within her she *must* say, or die. She gazed defiance upwards at the cloudless blue. The distant trees flattened themselves into dark clumps against the horizon. Swiftly she brought her eyes back to the diminishing earth. Something must be said; not to the sky, but in the world. She grew impatient for Mr. Shatov's arrival. If only she could convey to him all that was in her mind, going back again and again endlessly to some central unanswerable assertion, the truth would be out. Stated. At least one man brought to book, arrested and illuminated. But what was it? That men are not worthy of women? He would agree, and remain pleading. That men never have, never can, under-

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stand the least thing about even the worst woman in the world? He would find things to say. She plunged back groping for weapons of statement, amongst the fixities of the world, there from the beginning, and pressing at last with their mocking accomplishment, against her small thread of existence. Long grappling in darkness against the inexorable images, she fell back at last upon wordless repudiation, and again the gulf of isolation opened before her. The struggle was not to be borne. It was monstrous, unforgivable, that it should be demanded of her. Yet it could not be given up. The smallest glance in the direction of even the simulation of acceptance, brought a panic sense of treachery that flung her back to cling once more to the vanishing securities of her own untouched imagination.

When at last he appeared, the sight of the familiar distinctive little figure plunging energetically along, beard first, through the north London Sunday evening crowd drifting about the park gates, their sounds quenched by the blare of the Salvation Army's band marching townwards along the battered road, for one strange moment, while a moving light came across the gravel pathway at her feet, decking its shabby fringe of grass with the dewy freshness of some remembered world far away and unknown to this trampling blind north London, she asked herself what all the trouble was about. What after all had changed? Not herself, that was clear. Walking in fevered darkness had not destroyed the light. But he had joined her, pulling up before her with white ravaged face and hands stretched silently towards her.

"For pity's sake don't touch me," she cried in-

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voluntarily and walked on, accompanied, examining her outcry. It was right. It had a secret *knowledge*. They rode in silence on trams and bus. Below them on the dimly-lit pavements people moved, shadows broken loose and scattered in the grey of night. Gaslit, talking faces succeeded each other under the street lamps; not one speaking its thoughts; no feeling expressed that went even as deep as the screening chatter of words in the mind. But presently all about her, as she sat poised for the length of the journey between the dead stillness within her and the noise of the silence without, a world most wonderful was dawning with strange irrelevance, forcing her attention to lift itself from the abyss of her fatigue. Look at us, the buildings seemed to say, sweeping by massed and various and whole, spangled with light. We are here. We are the accomplished marvel. Buildings had always seemed marvellous; and in their moving, changing aspects an endless fascination, except in North London, where they huddled without distinction, defaced in feature and outline by a featureless blind occupancy. But tonight, it was North London that was revealing the marvel of the mere existence of a building. North Londoners were not under the spell; but it was there. Their buildings rising out of the earth where once there had been nothing, proclaimed it as they swept dreaming by, making roadways that were like long thoughts, meeting and crossing and going on and on, deep alleyways and little courts where always was a pool of light or darkness, pouring down from their secret communion with the sky a strange single reality upon the clothed and trooping multitude below. And all the strange unnoticed

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marvel of buildings and clothes, the even more marvelously strange unnoticed clothing of speech, all existing alone and independent outside the small existence of single lives and yet proclaiming them . . . an exclamation of wonder rose to her lips, and fell back checked, by the remembered occasion, to which for an instant she returned as a stranger, seeing the two figures side by side chained in suspended explanations that would not set them free, and left her gazing again, surrendered, addressing herself with a deepening ease of heart to the endless friendly strength flowing from things unconsciously brought about. It brought a balm that lulled her almost to sleep, so that when at last their journey was at an end she found herself wordless and adrift in a tiresome pain, that must be removed only because it blotted out marvels.

He began at once, standing before her, relating in simple unbroken speech the story of his student days, without pleading or extenuation; waiting at the end for her judgment.

"And that first photograph that I liked, was before; and the other, after."

"That is so."

"In the first there is some one looking out through the eyes; in the other that some one has moved away."

"That is so. I agree."

"Well, can't you see? Never to come back. Never to come back."

"Miriam. Remember I am no more than man. I was in suffering and in ignorance. It would have been better otherwise. I agree with you. But that is all past. I am no more that man."

"Can't you see that there is no past?"



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"I confess I do not understand this."

"It is crowding all round you. I felt it. Don't you remember? Before I knew. It comes between us all the time. I know now. It's not an idea; or prudishness. It's more solid than the space of air between us. I can't get through it."

"Remember I was suffering and *alone*." Somewhere within the vibrating tones was the careless shouting of his boyhood; that past was there too; and the eager lifting voice of his earlier student days, still sometimes alive in the reverie of his lifted singing brows. The voice had been quelled. In his memory as he stood there before her was pain, young lonely pain. Within the life thrown open without reservation to her gaze, she saw, confronting her determination to make him suffer, the image of unhealed suffering, still there, half stifled by his blind obedience to worldly ignorant advice, but waiting for the moment to step forward and lay its burden upon her own unwilling heart, leaving him healed and free. Tears sprang to her eyes, blotting him out, and with them she sprang forth into a pathless darkness, conscious far away behind her, soon to be obliterated on the unknown shores opening ahead, but there gladly in hand, of a debt, signed and to be honoured even against her will, by life, surprised once more at this darkest moment, smiling at her secretly, behind all she could gather of opposing reason and clamorous protests of unworthiness. "Poor boy," she gasped, gathering him as he sank to his knees, with swift enveloping hands against her breast. The unknown woman sat alone, with eyes wide open towards the empty air above his hidden face. This was man; leaning upon her with his burden of loneliness, at



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home and comforted. This was the truth behind the image of woman supported by man. The strong companion was a child seeking shelter; the woman's share an awful loneliness. It was not fair.

She moved to raise and restore him, at least to the semblance of a supporting presence. But with a sudden movement he bent and caught a fold of her dress to his lips. She rose with a cry of protest, urging him to his feet.

"I know now," he said simply, "why men kneel to women." While in her heart she thanked heaven for preserving her to that hour, the dreadful words, invested her in yet another loneliness. She seemed to stand tall and alone, isolated for a moment from her solid surroundings, within a spiral of unconsuming radiance.

"No one ought to kneel to any one," she lied in pity, and moved out restlessly into the room. We are real. As others have been real. There is a sacred bond between us now, ratified by all human experience. But oh the cost and the demand. It was as if she were carrying in her hand something that could be kept safe only by a life-long silence. Everything she did and said in future must hide the sacred trust. It gave a freedom; but not of speech or thought. It left the careless dreaming self behind. Only in ceaseless occupation could it hold its way. Its only confidant would be God. Holding to it, everything in life, even difficulties, would be transparent. But seen from the outside, by the world, an awful mysteriously persistent commonplace. It was not fair that men did not know the whole of this secret place and its compact. Why was God in league only with women?

## CHAPTER XII

**I**T'S not altogether personal. . . . Until it is understood and admitted, there is a darkness everywhere. The life of every man in existence, who does not understand and admit it, is perfectly senseless. Until they know they are all living in vain.

"What on earth did you mean?" she said as soon as the omnibus had started.

He turned a startled musing face. He had *forgotten*.

"What have I said?"

"Kindly think."

"Really I am at a loss."

"When that woman collided with me, crossing the road."

"Ah, ah, I remember. Well?"

"You pronounced an opinion."

"It is not my opinion. It is a matter of ascertained fact."

"Facts are invented by people who start with their conclusions arranged beforehand."

"Perhaps so."

"Ah well; that is an admission."

"The conclusion is amply verified."

"Where?"

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"I speak only of women in the mass. There are of course exceptions."

"Go on, go on."

"I see you are annoyed. Let us leave this matter."

"Kindly go on."

"There is nothing more to say." He *laughed*. He was not even being aware that it was a matter of life and death. He could go on serenely living in an idea, that turned life into a nightmare.

"Oh if it amuses you." He was silent. The moments went beating on. She turned from him and sat averted. She would go now onward and onward till she could get away over the edge of the world. There was nothing else to do. There were no thoughts or words in which her conviction could take shape. Even looking for them was a degradation. Besides, argument, if she could steady herself to face the pain of it, would not, whatever he might say, even dislodge his satisfied unconcern. He was uneasy; but only about herself, and would accept reassurance from her, without a single backward glance. But what did their personal fate matter beside a question so all-embracing? What future could they have in unacknowledged disagreement over central truth? And if it were acknowledged, what peace?

The long corridor of London imprisoned her. Far away beneath her tumult it was making its appeal, renewing the immortal compact. The irregular façades, dull greys absorbing the light, bright buffs throwing it brilliantly out, dadoed below with a patchwork of shops, and overhead the criss-cross of telephone wires, shut her away from the low-hung soft

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grey sky. But far away, unflinching, retreating as the long corridor telescoped towards them, an obliterating saffron haze filled the vista, holding her in her place.

The end of the journey brought them to grey streets and winding alleys where the masts and rigging that had loomed suddenly in the distance, robbing the expedition of its promise of ending in some strange remoteness with their suggestion of blind busy worlds beyond London, were lost to sight.

"This must be the docks," she said politely.

With the curt permission of a sentinel policeman they went through a gateway appearing suddenly before them in a high grey wall. Miriam hurried forward to meet the open scene for one moment alone, and found herself on a little quay surrounding a square basin of motionless grey water shut in by wooden galleries, stacked with mouldering casks. But the air was the air that moves softly on still days over wide waters and in the shadowed light of the enclosure, the fringe of green where the water touched the grey stone of the quay gleamed brilliantly in the stillness. She breathed in, in spite of herself, the charm of the scene; an ordered completeness, left to itself in beauty; its lonely beauty to be gathered only by the chance passer-by.

"This is a strange romantic place," said Mr. Shatov conversationally by her side.

"There is nothing," said Miriam unwillingly, feeling her theme weaken as she looked away from it to voice well-known words, "*Nothing* that reveals more completely the spiritual," her voice gave over

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the word which broke into meaninglessness upon the air, "the status of a man as his estimate of women."

"I entirely agree. I was a feminist in my college days. I am still a feminist."

Miriam pondered. The word was new to her. But how could any one be a feminist and still think women most certainly inferior beings?

"Ah," she cried, "you are one of the Huxleys."

"I don't follow you."

"Oh well. *He*, impertinent schoolboy, graciously suggested that women should be given every possible kind of advantage, educational and otherwise; saying almost in the same breath that they could never reach the highest places in civilization; that Nature's Salic Law would never be repealed."

"Well, how is it to be repealed?"

"I don't know I'm sure. I'm not wise enough to give instruction in repealing a law that has never existed. But who is Huxley, that he should take upon himself to say what are the highest places in civilization?"

"Miriam," he said, coming round to stand before her. "We are not going to quarrel over this matter." She refused to meet his eyes.

"It is not a question of quarrelling, or even discussion. You have told me all I want to know. I see exactly where you stand; and for my part it *decides*, many things. I don't say this to amuse myself or because I want to, but because it is the only thing I can possibly do."

"Miriam. In this spirit nothing can be said at all. Let us rather go have tea."

Poor little man, perhaps he was weary; troubled in

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this strange grey corner of a country not his own, isolated with an unexpected anger. They had tea in a small dark room behind a little shop. It was close packed with an odorous dampness. Miriam sat frozen, appalled by the presence of a negro. He sat nearby, huge, bent snorting and devouring, with a huge black bottle at his side. Mr. Shatov's presence was shorn of its alien quality. He was an Englishman in the fact that he and she could *not* sit eating in the neighbourhood of this marshy jungle. But they were, they had. They would have. Once away from this awful place she would never think of it again. Yet the man had hands and needs and feelings. Perhaps he could sing. He was at a disadvantage, an outcast. There was something that ought to be said to him. She could not think what it was. In his oppressive presence it was impossible to think at all. Every time she sipped her bitter tea it seemed that before she could have replaced her cup, vengeance would have sprung from the dark corner. Everything hurried so. There was no *time* to shake off the sense of contamination. It *was* contamination. The man's presence was an outrage on something of which he was not aware. It would be possible to make him aware. When his fearful face, which she sadly knew she could not bring herself to regard a second time, was out of sight, the outline of his head was desolate, like the contemplated head of any man alive. Men ought not to have faces. Their real selves abode in the expressions of their heads and brows. Below, their faces were moulded by deceit. . . .

While she had pursued her thoughts, advantage had fallen to the black form in the corner. It was



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as if the black face grinned, crushing her thread of thought.

"You see, Miriam, if instead of beating me, you will tell me your *thoughts*, it is quite possible that mine may be modified. There is at least nothing of the bigot in me."

"It is not what people may be made to see for a few minutes in conversation that counts. It is the conclusions they come to, instinctively, by themselves." He wanted to try and think as she did . . . "*chose attendrissante; ils se ressemblaient*" . . . life . . . *was* different, to everybody, even to intellectual male vain-boasters, from everybody's descriptions; there was nothing to point to anywhere that exactly corresponded to spoken opinions. But the relieving truth of this was only realized privately. The things went on being said. Men did not admit their private discoveries in public. It was not enough to see and force the admittance of the holes in a theory privately, and leave the form of words going on and on in the world, perpetually parroted, infecting the sky. "Wise women know better and go their way without listening," is not enough. It is not only the insult to women; a contempt for men is a bulwark against that, but introduces sourness into one's own life. . . . It is the impossibility of witnessing the pouring on of a vast, repeating public life that is missing the significance of everything.

Yet what a support, she thought with a sideways glance, was his own gentleness . . . gentillesse . . . and humanity, to his own theory. He was serene and open in the presence of this central bitterness. If she could summon, in words, convincing evidence of the inferiority of man, he would cheerfully accept it

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and go on unmaimed. But a private reconstruction of standards in agreement with one person would not bring healing. It was history, literature, the way of stating records, reports, stories, the whole method of statement of things from the beginning that was on a false foundation.

If only one could speak as quickly as one's thoughts flashed, and several thoughts together, all with a separate life of their own and yet belonging, everybody would be understood. As it was, even in the most favourable circumstances, people could hardly communicate with each other at all.

"I have nothing to say. It is not a thing that can be argued out. Those women's rights people are the worst of all. Because they think women have been 'subject' in the past. Women never have been subject. Never can be. The proof of this is the way men have always been puzzled and everlastingly trying fresh theories; founded *on* the very small experience of women any man is capable of having. Disabilities, imposed by law, are a stupid insult to women, but have never touched them as individuals. In the long run they injure only men. For they keep back the civilization of the outside world, which is the only thing men can make. It is not everything. It is a sort of result, poor and shaky because the real inside civilization of women, the one thing that has been in them from the first and is not in the natural man, not made by 'things,' is kept out of it. Women do not need civilization. It is apt to bore them. *But* it can never rise above their level. They keep it back. That does not matter, to themselves. But it matters to men.

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And if they want their old civilization to be anything but a dreary-weary puzzle, they must leave off imagining themselves a race of gods fighting against chaos, and thinking of women as part of the chaos they have to civilize. There isn't any 'chaos.' Never has been. It's the principal masculine illusion. It is not a truth to say that women must be civilized. [Feminists are not only an insult to womanhood. They are a libel on the universe." In the awful presence she had spoken herself out, found and recited her best most liberating words. The little unseen room shone, its shining speaking up to her from small things immediately under her eyes. Light, pouring from her speech, sent a radiance about the thick black head and its monstrous bronze face. He might have his thoughts, might even look them, from the utmost abyss of crude male life, but he had helped her, and his blind unconscious outlines shared the unknown glory. But she doubted if she would remember that thoughts flowed more easily, with surprising ease, as if given, waiting, ready to be scanned and stated, when one's eyes ceased to look outwards. If she could remember it, it might prove to be the solution of social life.

"These things are all matters of opinion. Whereas it is a matter of indisputable *fact* that in the past women have been subject."

"If you believe that it is impossible for us to associate. Because we are living in two utterly different worlds."

"On the contrary. [This difference is a most excellent basis for association."

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"You think I can cheerfully regard myself as an emancipated slave, with traditions of slavery for memory and the form of a slave as an everlasting heritage?"

"Remember that heredity is cross-wise. You are probably more the daughter of your father . . ."

"*That* won't help you, thank you. If anything I am my mother's son."

"Ah—ah, what is this, you are a *son*. Do you see?"

"That's a piece of English feudalism."

"The demands of feudalism do not explain a woman's desire for sons."

"That is another question. She hopes *they* will give her the understanding she never had from their father. In that I *am* my mother's son for ever. If there's a future life, all I care for is to meet *her*. If I could have her back for ten minutes I would gladly give up the rest of my life. . . . Is heredity really criss-cross? Is it proved?"

"Substantially."

"Oh yes. Of course. I know. To prevent civilization going ahead too fast! I've seen that somewhere. Very flattering to men. But it proves there's no separate race of men and women."

"Exactly."

"Then how have men the face to go on with their generalizations about women?"

"You yourself have a generalization about women."

"That's different. It's not about brains and attainments. I can't make you see. I suppose it's Christianity."

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"What is Christianity? You think Christianity is favourable to women? On the contrary. It is the Christian countries that have produced the prostitute and the most vile estimations of women in the world. It is only in Christian countries that I find the detestable spectacle of men who will go straight from association with loose women into the society of innocent girls. That I find unthinkable. . . . With Jews womanhood has always been sacred. And there can be no doubt that we owe our persistence as a race largely to our laws of protection for women; *all* women. Moreover in the older Hebrew civilization women stood very high. You may read this. Today there is a very significant Jewish wit which says that women make the best wives and mothers in the world."

"There you are. No Englishman would make a joke like that."

"Because he is a hypocrite."

"No. He may, as you say, think one thing and say another; but long long ago he had a jog. It *was* Christianity. Something happened. Christ was the first man to see women as individuals."

"You speak easily of Christianity. There is no Christianity in the world. It has never been imagined, save in the brain of a Tolstoy. And he has shown that if the principles of Christianity were applied, civilization as we know it would at once come to an end."

"There may not be much Christianity. But Christianity has made a difference. It has not given things to women that were not there before. Nothing can do that. But it has shed a light on them *which* the

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best women run away from. Never imagine I am speaking of myself. I'm as much a man as a woman. That's why I can't help seeing things. But I'm not really interested. Not inside myself. Now look here. You prefer Englishwomen to Jewesses. I can't bear Jewesses, not because they are not really like other women, but because they reflect the limitations of the Jewish male. They talk and think the Jewish man's idea of them. It has nothing to do with them as individuals. But they are waiting for the light to go up."

"I speak always of these assimilated and half-assimilated English Jewesses. Certainly to me they are most inimical."

"More so than the Germans?"

"In a different way. They have here less social disabilities. But they are most absolutely terre-à-terre."

"Why are Russian Jewesses different?"

"Many of them are idealist. Many live altogether by one or two ideas of Tolstoy."

"Why do you smile condescendingly?"

"These ideas can lead only to revolution. I am not a revolutionary. While I admire everywhere those who suffer for their ideals."

"You admit that Tolstoy has influenced Russian Jewesses. *He* got his ideas from Christ. So you say. I did not know he was religious."

"It is a later development. But you remember Levin. But tell me, do you not consider that wife and mother is the highest position of woman?"

"It is neither high nor low. It may be anything. If you define life for women, as husbands and children,



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it means that you have no consciousness at all where women are concerned."

"There is the evidence of women themselves. The majority find their whole life in these things."

"That is a description, from outside, by men. When women use it they do not know what they say."

## CHAPTER XIII

**I**T was strange that it should be the house that had always caught her eye, as she crossed the square; one of the spots that always made the years of her London life show as a continuous communion with the rich brightness of the west-end. The houses round about it were part of the darker colour of London, creating even in the sunlight the beloved familiar London atmosphere of dun-coloured mist and grime. But this house was a brilliant white, its windows fringed, during the season, with the gentle deep velvet pink of ivy-leaf geraniums and having, across the lower half of its façade, a fine close trellis of green painted wood, up which a green creeper clambered, neat and sturdy, with small bright polished leaves making a woodland blur across the diamond patterned mesh of white and green. There were other creepers in the square, but they hung in festoons, easily shabby, spoiled at their brightest by the thought of their stringy bare tendrils hung with shrivelled leaves. These small green leaves faded and dried and fell crisply, leaving a network of clean twigs to gleam in the rain, and the trellis bright green against the white house-front, suggesting summer all the year round.

She went eagerly towards this permanent summer created by wealth, warmed by the imagined voice of

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a power that could transform all difficulties, setting them in a beauty that lived by itself.

The little leaves, seen from the doorstep, shone like bright enamel in the misty twilight; but their beautiful wild clean-cut shapes, so near, suddenly seemed helpless, unable to escape, forced to drape the walls, life-fevered within, to which their stems were pinned. . . . But there was a coming in and out. . . . All people in houses had a coming in and out, those moments of coming, anew, out into endless space. And everywhere at moments, in houses, was the sense of the life of the whole world flowing in. Even Jewish houses were porous to the life of the world, and to have a house, however strangely shaped one's life, would be to have a vantage point for breathing in the life of the world. . . . She stood in a lull, reprieved, her endlessly revolving problem left behind, the future in abeyance, perhaps to be shown her by the woman waiting within, set in surroundings that now called to her jubilantly, proclaiming themselves to be the only object of her visit. For a moment she found herself back in her old sense of the marvel of existence, gazing at the miraculous spectacle of people and things, existing; herself, however perplexed and resourceless, within it, everything sinking into insignificance beside the fact of being alive, having lived on to another moment of unexplainable glorious happiness. Light-heartedly she rang the bell. The small movement of her lifted hand was supported, a permitted part of the whole tremendous panorama; and in that whole she was *England*, a link in the world-wide being of England and English life. The bell, grinding out its summons within the house, brought her

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back within the limits of the occasion, but she could not drive away the desire to go forward without return, claiming welcome and acceptance, in a life permanently set in beauty.

The door flew open revealing a tall resentfully handsome butler past whom she went confidently announcing her appointment, into an immense hall, its distances leading in every direction to doors, suggesting a variety of interiors beyond her experience. She was left standing. Some one who had come up the steps as the door opened, was being swiftly conveyed, a short squat polished wealthy old English Jew with curly grey hair and an eager busy plunging gait, across the hall to the centremost door. It opened on a murmur of voices and the light from within fell upon a table just outside, its surface crowded with gleaming top-hats. Some kind of men's meeting was in progress. The woman was not in it. . . . Had she anticipated, before she married, what it would be, however she might fortify herself with scorn, to breathe always the atmosphere of the Jewish religious and social oblivion of women? Had she had any experience of Jewesses, their sultry conscious femineity, their dreadful acceptance of being admitted to synagogue on sufferance, crowded away upstairs in a stuffy gallery, while the men downstairs, bathed in light, draped in the symbolic shawl, thanked God aloud for making them men and not women? Had she thought what it must be to have always at her side a Jewish consciousness, unconscious of her actuality, believing in its own positive existence, seeing her as human only in her consecration to relationships?

The returning butler ushered her unannounced

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through a doorway near at hand into a room that spread dimly about her in a twilight deepened by a single core of rosy light at the centre of the expanse. Through a high curtain-draped archway she caught a glimpse, as she came forward, of a further vastness, shadowy in undisturbed twilight.

Mrs. Bergstein had risen to meet her, her head obscured in the gloom above the lamplight, so that only her gown met Miriam's first sally of investigation; a refined middle-class gown of thin dull black whose elbow sleeves and little vee neck were softened at the edge with a ruche of tulle; the party dress of a middle-aged spinster schoolmistress. Miriam braced herself in vain against its seductions; it called to her so powerfully to come forth and rejoice. She revelled off, licensed and permitted, the free deputy of this chained presence, amongst the enchantments of the great house; the joy of her escapade leaping bright against the dark certainty that there was no help awaiting her. It was no longer to be feared that an unscrupulous, successful, brightly cajoling woman would persuade her that her problem did not exist; but neither from this woman to whom the fact of life as a thing in itself never had time to appear, could she hope for support in her own belief in the unsoundness of compromise.

Mrs. Bergstein bowed, murmured a greeting and indicated a little settee near the low chair into which she immediately subsided, her face still in shadow, the shape of her coiffure so much in keeping with the dress that Miriam could hardly refrain from departing then and there. She sat down, a schoolgirl waiting for judgment against which she was armed in advance,

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and yet helpless through her unenvious, scornful admiration.

"I was much interested by your letter," said Mrs. Bergstein.

The interview was at an end. There was no opening in the smooth close surface represented by the voice, through which questions could be driven home. She was smitten into silence where the sound of the voice echoed and re-echoed, whilst she fumbled for a suitable phrase, clinging to the memory of the statement, still somewhere, which she had come, so desperately, to hear and carry away and set down, a ray of light in the darkness of her revolving thoughts. A numb forgetfulness assailed her, threatening the disaster of irrelevance of speech or behaviour coming from the tides of expression she felt beating below it. She forced a murmured response from her lips, and the tumult was stilled to an echo that flung itself to and fro within, answering the echo of the woman's voice on the air. She had caught hold and contributed. It was now the turn of the other to go on and confirm what she had revealed. . . .

"Music is so *beautiful*—so *elevating*." "That depends upon the music." Never said. Kept treacherously back for the sake of things that might be lost in a clashing of opinions . . . the things they never thought of in exercising their benevolence, and demanding in return acceptance of their views . . . the light of a whole world condensed in the bright old town, the sweet chiming sound of it, coming in at the windows, restoring childhood, the expanses of leisure made by their small hard circle, a world of thoughtless ideas, turning a short week-end into a life, lived before,



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familiar, building out in the nerves a glorious vitality. . . .

It was the same voice, the English lady's voice, bringing all Christendom about her, all the traditions within which, so lately, she had felt herself committed steadfastly to tread. But there was something left out of it, a warmth was missing, it had not in it the glow that was in those other women's voices, of kindness towards the generous things they had secretly, willingly renounced. It had, instead, something that was like a cold clean blade thrusting into an intelligible future, something inexorable, founded not upon a fixed ideas, but upon ideas, single and cold. This woman would not make concessions; she would always stand, uncompromisingly, in face of every one, men and women, for the same things, clear cut, delicate and narrowly determining as her voice.

"You are considering the possibility of embracing the Jewish faith?"

"Well, *no*," said Miriam startled into briskness by the too quickly developing accumulation of speech. "I heard that you had done so; and wondered, how it was possible, for an Englishwoman."

"You are a Christian?"

"I don't know. I was brought up in the Anglican Church."

"Much depends upon the standpoint from which one approaches the very definite and simple creed of Judaism. I myself was a Unitarian, and therefore able to take the step without making a break with my earlier convictions."

"I see," said Miriam coldly. Fate had deceived her, holding in reserve the trick of this simple

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explanation. She gazed at the seated figure. The glow of her surroundings was quenched by the chill of a perpetually active *reason*. . . . Science, ethics, withering commonsense playing over everything in life, making a harsh bareness everywhere, seeing nothing alive but the cold processes of the human mind; having Tennyson read at services because poetry was one of the superior things produced by humanity. . . . She wondered whether this woman, so exactly prepared to meet a Jewish reform movement, had been helplessly born into Unitarianism, or had taken it up as she herself had nearly done.

“Much of course depends upon the synagogue through which one is admitted.” Ah; she *had* felt the impossibilities. She had compromised and was excusing her compromise.

“Of course I have heard of the reform movement.” . . . The silence quivered with the assertion that the reformers were as much cut off from Judaism as Unitarianism from Anglican Christianity. To enter a synagogue that made special arrangements for the recognition of women was to admit that women were dependent on recognition. The silence admitted the dilemma. Mrs. Bergstein had passed through these thoughts, suffering? Though she had found a way through, following her cold clear reason, she still suffered?

“I think I should find it impossible to associate with Jewish *women*.”

“*That* is a point you must consider very carefully indeed.” The room leapt into glowing reality. They *were* at one; Englishwomen with a common incommunicable sense. Outcasts. . . . Far away, within

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the warm magic circle of English life, sounded the careless easy slipshod voices of Englishmen, she saw their averted talking forms, aware in every line, and protective, of something that Englishwomen held in their hands.

"Don't you find," she began breathlessly, but calm even tones drove across her eagerness: "What is your fiancé's attitude towards religion?"

"He is not exactly religious and not fully in sympathy with the reform movement because he is a Zionist and thinks that the old ritual is the only link between the persecuted Jews and those who are better placed; that it would be treachery to break with it as long as any are persecuted. . . . Nevertheless, he is willing to renounce his Judaism."

The Queen, who is religious, puts love before religion, for woman. Her Protestantism. He for God only, she for God in him, and able to change her creed when she marries. A Catholic *couldn't*. And she would call Catholics idolators. *She* is an idolator; of men.

Mrs. Bergstein was amazed at his willingness. Envious. . . . *I am a Jew, a "head" man incapable of "love."* . . . *It is your eyes. I must see them always. . . . I know now what is meant by love. . . . I am even willing to renounce my Judaism. . . . Michael* to think and say that. I am crowned, for life by a sacrifice I cannot accept. He must keep his Judaism. . . . "You *must* marry me". . . . The discovery, flowing through the grey noisy street, of the secret of the "mastery" idea; that women can only be sure that a man is sure when——

"There is then *no* common religious feeling between you?"

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She had moved. The light fell upon her. She was about *forty*. She had come forth, so late, from the secret numbness of her successful independent life, and had not found what she came to seek. She was still alone in her circling day. At the period of evening dress she put on a heavy gold bracelet, ugly, a heavy ugly shape. Her face was pinched and drawn; before her lay the ordeal of belated motherhood. Vulgarly violating her refined endurance had come this incident. Dignified condemnation spoke from her averted eyes. She had said her say and was desiring that there should be no further waste of time.

Miriam made no sound. In the stillness that followed the blow she faced the horrible summary, stricken to her feet, her strength ebbing with her thoughts into the gathering swirling darkness. She waited for a moment. But Mrs. Bergstein made no sign. Imponderable, conscious only of the weight of her body about her holding her to the ground beneath her feet, she went away from the room and the house. In the lamplit darkness her feet carried her joyously forward into the freshness of the tree-filled air. The large square, lying between her and the street where he was waiting, seemed an immensity. She recovered within it the strange unfailing freedom of solitude in the sounding spaces of London and hurried on to be by his side generally expressive of her rejoicing. The world's condemnation was out of sight, behind her. But he would ask, and whatever she said, the whole problem would be there afresh, insoluble. He would never see that it had been confirmed, never admit anything contemptible in their association. . . . It was because there was no contempt in him that she was

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hurrying. But alone again with him, the troubled darkness behind her would return with its maddening influence. She was fleeing from it only towards its darkest centre.

THE END











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